

Translated extract from

Dieter Böge / Bernd Mölck-Tassel (Illustration)
Was tun!?.
Bajazzo Verlag
Zürich 2008
ISBN 978-3-905871-01-2

pp. 1-40

Dieter Böge / Bernd Mölck-Tassel (Illustrator)
What is there to do?

Translated by Helena Ragg-Kirkby

what is there to do!?

There's nothing for it —
You've got to do *something*.

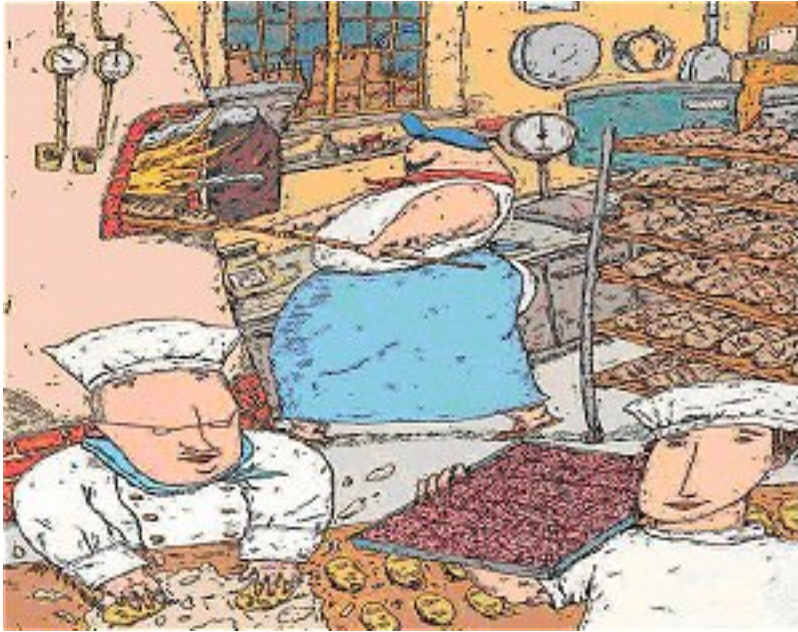
Every single day things are getting done throughout the entire world.
On the streets and in the houses,
on building sites and stages,
at airports and on plantations,
in classrooms, swimming baths and factories.
Everywhere there are people working for themselves and for others.
And when you really think about it,
no one can do things on their own.

Obviously you can paint a picture all on your own.
But who made the brush?
And who made the paper?
How did your sketch pad get to the shop?
And who built the shop?

You could spend the entire day saying thank you
to people you don't even know.

organising things

Most people work in offices.
But you can't see what they're really doing.
They talk on the phone and click away with their mouse,
and that's just about all that happens right there in the office.
But it's all go in the places they're ringing up:
lorries are loaded up,
hotel rooms are cleaned,
helicopters carrying spare parts are sent to oil rigs,
and school buses are warned at the last minute
about black ice.
By going-home time the office people are completely exhausted,
for in their heads they've devised and planned and executed
all the jobs themselves.



baking

In the bakery the dough is kneaded during the night.
The ovens are turned on
long before it's light outside.
It gets lovely and warm in the bakehouse,
warmer than in your bed.
And by the time you get up,
the rolls are ready.
When do you suppose the bakers have breakfast?

running

Running isn't really a job.
Running is a simple, natural human activity.
Our bodies are made for it. That's why running's healthy, too;
especially if you run slowly.
People who run fast, faster than other people,
can even earn money doing it.
As career athletes — in other words as pros.

building

Houses are meant to be attractive
and of course practical.
An architect draws up the plans.
Then the workmen build the house.
They all do their jobs in turn.
Once the bricklayers have finished the walls,
the joiners fit the doors and windows.
And before the roofers can start,

the carpenters first have to put up the roof timbers.
Often they wear old-fashioned clothes and enormous hats.
Partly to protect themselves against wind and sun,
partly because it looks great.



helping

Fortunately bad luck doesn't hit us very often.
Most people's houses never catch fire, for instance.
Even so, firemen are out there day and night doing their job.
The city's big, and there's always someone somewhere
in need of help.
You can often hear the fire engines, and sometimes see them too,
but only guess at what has happened.
Did someone need rescuing from the flames?
Are they threatened by toxic smoke?
Or simply trapped in the lift?
Whatever the reason, someone has rung up.
And by the way, do *you* know how to ring the fire brigade?

learning

When life was still savage and dangerous,
no one could read or write,
and schools were nowhere to be found.
Nowhere.
But children still had to learn things.
How to make fire, for instance,
how to collect fruits, how to hunt bears.

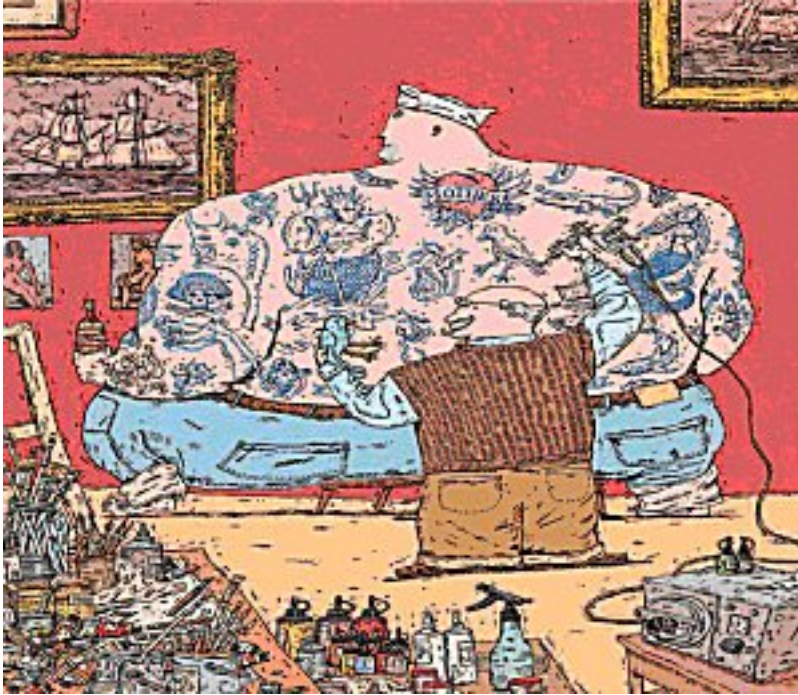
They had to be cunning and brave.
Everything that humans have learnt and experienced since those days
can be seen in museums
and read about in big fat books.
Some books are so fat, though,
that you need a bit of courage to get started on them.
But nothing can really happen to you if you do.

researching

Researchers are very keen to find something out,
but they can't ask anyone
as no one knows the answer.
They have to discover the answer for themselves.
They search for it in the jungle and on the high seas.
Those interested in apes spend years observing apes.
Others look for answers in research laboratories.
They gaze through magnifying glasses and microscopes.
They measure everything exactly,
they write everything down,
and sometimes they discover things they hadn't even been looking for.
America, for instance.

fishing

Somewhere beneath the fierce waves
fish are swimming.
Where? And how far down?
That's something you can't see with your own eyes.
But if you want to catch fish
then it's something you need to find out one way or another,
otherwise your nets will simply get wet
and dangle empty in the wind.
That's why modern trawlers carry echo-sounders.
They reveal the swarms of fish beneath the sea.
The fish would no doubt have preferred to remain invisible,
but the gulls are pleased.



painting pictures

Even thirty thousand years ago
cave dwellers were painting pictures.
They painted animals and huntsmen straight onto the walls of their caves.
So we know what mattered to them
even though they didn't know how to write.
Anyone capable of drawing or painting
can tell the story of his own world.
You can paint whatever you like,
but different people like different things.
People who earn their living by painting for others
therefore have to pay some heed
to their wishes and ideas.
A seaman might dream of a ship.

manufacturing

People who make things
don't always know exactly what will become of them.
The man in the foundry
turning molten metal into engine parts
may never hear
whether the motor roars or purrs.
He might end up fashioning 7000 parts
for a bridge over the Yangtse Kiang.
He'll probably never go there himself.
But the parts will be a perfect fit.
And one day

a moped will no doubt cross the bridge
with a cylinder block made in his foundry.
One can't be sure,
but it might be you on it
in the course of a holiday.

bartering

'A pig for ten live chickens.'
Before the invention of money
there was only bartering.
Then one day money came onto the market.
Until the appearance of proper coins
other things were used instead.
Rare shells, for instance.
'A pig for five shells.
Special offer!'
So if one small cow was worth four large pigs,
how many shells did you have to give for it?
And how many chickens?
Paying for things with money
is certainly more practical
— but no cheaper.

pretending

Actors wear costumes when they work.
It's easier to walk and talk like a queen
if you're wearing a crown
even if it's not made of gold.
Everything's an act in the theatre;
only the spectators' emotions are genuine.
Some people are really sad
if a character cries on stage,
or frightened if one of them dies.
There's laughter, tears and death in the theatre,
and an actor can find himself being
slaughtered every night in the third act.
But stage blood
tastes of peppermint.

doing nothing

If no one's telling you what to do,
Do you do nothing?
Or do you perhaps watch the birds
or think about something or other?
Taking time out for yourself is certainly not laziness!

singing

Before the music starts
everyone looks eagerly at the singer.
What will her voice sound like?
And what will her song be about?
The musicians know, of course,
and pay careful attention to every note.
They accompany the song on their instruments.
They emphasise the rhythm and the melody with real feeling.
Thus the music is conveyed your ear
and you feel it in your whole body.
You notice it when your foot starts tapping out the beat.

forgetting

Many things that are done every day
aren't mentioned in this book.
There are so many strange jobs,
and so many different things we could do.
We had to leave some out,
and some we've forgotten.
Our book has 40 pages,
there are 24 hours in the day,
and now and again we had to sleep.
Everyone does that, but of course it's not a job.
No matter what you do,
whether it's riding in a rodeo or reading a book,
there are some things you must never forget:
always clean your teeth;
always be kind.