

Boredom with Husserl and Beyond

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ABSTRACT: The present treatise tackles the phenomenon of boredom by first providing reasons for evading the dualistic approach to the phenomenon addressed. Based on the Cartesian criticism of the oversimplified dualist approach of neuroscience, the paper delves into the phenomenological approach to the phenomenon of boredom, as could be only indirectly surmised from Husserl's (basically Cartesian) transcendental phenomenology of time consciousness. The next chapter deals with Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology as implicated in his compelling and as of yet unsurpassed analysis of the phenomenon of boredom. Through approaching the phenomenon of boredom via Husserl and Heidegger, the basic discontinuity between Husserl's transcendental and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology comes clearly to the fore.

KEYWORDS: Boredom, dualism, fundamental attunement, Heidegger, Husserl, indifference, time-consciousness.

I. Dualism and Boredom

Undeniably, boredom today is on the rise; and so are neuroscience and neurophilosophy – and with them the (easily avoidable, but ever-present) danger of the naturalistic reduction of reality. Neuroscientists have located, or better, localized the problem by physiologically blaming it on the lack or depletion of the chemical called dopamine. According to their findings, this chemical triggers a response in the human brain, emotionally self-reflected or recognized as the feeling of joy and excitement. It may of course be argued that “boredom-prone individuals may have a naturally lower level of dopamine, which then requires from these individuals a heightened sense of novelty – to get the dopamine flowing.”¹ It may also be argued that indi-

¹ Toohey (2011: 46). It should be noted here that Toohey is not a neuroscientist. His mention of scientific findings only serves as a springboard for arguing in favour of a more

viduals, not necessarily affected by naturally low dopamine levels, can suffer from boredom-like symptoms, caused by the boring, monotonous environment. We may rightly ask ourselves, however, is this all there is to it? The “it” meaning the human being, this most peculiar creature in all creation, the half-breed of angel and animal, in her unfathomable depth and complexity. *There are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in neurophilosophy.*

The underlying framework of these findings is the notorious Cartesian split between mind and body. We say “underlying” because what is at work in the arguments mentioned above is a further reduction of this monumental dualism to an entirely corporeal dualism of inner and outer reality, both resting on the substance of matter: genes and environment as inner and outer reality both belong to the corporeal reality.²

The reputation or notoriety of an author usually brings along the oversimplified generalized view on the author’s basic conception. The one at work here, that of the split, relies on the following conclusion by Descartes in the sixth meditation of his famous *Meditations on the First Philosophy*:

And although possibly I possess a body with which I am very intimately conjoined, yet because, on the one side, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself inasmuch I am only a thinking and unextendable thing, and as on the other, I possess a distinct idea of body, inasmuch as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that this I is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (Descartes 1993: 91)

In this case, Descartes’ dualism can be easily challenged with a more careful reading of his *Meditations*, the very source of the infamous dualism.³ *Cogito* as the thinking thing and its thoughts, cogitations, is a complex phenomenality, with its specific “thoughts” divided

into certain kinds [...] Of my thoughts some are, so to speak, images of the things, and to these alone is the title “idea” properly applied; [...] But other

philosophical approach, as does ours. Still, we would like to voice sharp disagreement over the following resentment (2011: 6): “Existential boredom seems more of an impressive intellectual formulation than an actual emotion.”

² It is by no means our intention here to push neuroscientific research findings aside as entirely irrelevant. Rather, and far more importantly, it is of crucial importance *what one does with these findings*. The relevance of the neurobiological or neuropsychological research can be readily established for example in the field of psychotherapy, both practically and theoretically, as in the case of Margaret Wilkinson (2006, 2010), Jungian analyst, who has written two compelling books on the subject, emphasizing the valuable contribution of contemporary neuroscience to both understanding the mind-brain relationship as well as recognizing its valuable contribution to clinical practice.

³ This is usually so with every compelling philosopher, who first of all evinces elusiveness – meaning liveliness – of thought, irreducible to one basic tenet.

thoughts possess other forms as well. For example in willing, fearing, approving, denying, though I always perceive something as the subject of the action of my mind, yet by this action I always add something else to the idea which I have of that thing; and of the thoughts of this kind some are called volitions or affections, and other judgements.

Now as to what concerns ideas, if we consider them only in themselves and do not relate them to anything else beyond themselves, they cannot properly speaking be false. (1993: 60)

Without even approaching the controversial topic of the famously unscientific theory of the pineal gland,⁴ the passage clearly shows that there is a certain relatedness in cogito, which places the thinking thing in the very midst between the two seemingly (1993: 91) “entirely and absolutely” distinct substances.

Judgements can be either true or false exactly in that they reach beyond the thinking thing, into outer reality; and the same can be said of affections. What is of crucial importance here is that in Descartes, affections as cogitations are manners of fulfilment of the thinking thing, epistemologically troublesome as they may be, the modes of comportment of the *Cogito* to itself and outer world. Affection is the result of the affectedness of the *Cogito* by a thing from outer world. The *Cogito* lets itself be affected by external things. This letting-be is the *ability* of an affective encounter with things. And this “subjective” fulfilment of affectedness by affecting things is a specific, basic mode of *intentionality*. Judgement, volition and affection contain more than ideas in the proper sense (as nothing but images of things) and this “more” of affectivity should be understood as the *Cogito*’s capacity of letting be moved by the world.⁵

With this said, we have provisionally addressed some troublesome aspects of the dualistic approach to the subject matter chosen. The reason for it is obvious: the neurobiological (psychological) or environmental (sociological) approach fail to address the essence of boredom in that they reduce it to, and blame it on a context (physical process or reality) exterior to its proper truth. In order to come closer to boredom, or address its “interiority”, we need to distance ourselves from the dualistic approach, and enter the field of transcendental philosophy.

⁴ “I further notice that the mind does not receive the impressions from all parts of the body immediately, but only from the brain, or perhaps even from one of its smallest parts, to wit, from that in which the common sense is said to reside [...]” (1993: 97) In *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes speaks of *les esprits animaux*, animal (or better animated) spirits, which are situated in a small (pineal) gland as the seat of the soul, are extended, yet so tiny that they already belong to the spiritual substance.

⁵ See Coriando (2002).

II. Transcendental Turn and Boredom

Husserl, to be sure, never tackled the issue of boredom. Yet, we might indirectly reveal the essence of boredom exactly by explicating its temporal essence. In other words, Husserl's conceptual framework, employed in his analyses on time, proves fruitful for determining the peculiar nature of boredom.

Performing phenomenological reduction leaves the meditating subject with the evidence of subjective, experiential flow of cogitations or intentional content and leaves the question of the existence of outer objectivity bracketed out or undecided. If, according to Husserl, every intentional act has such a content, which can be articulated independently of how the act is actually related to the transcendent world, then the situational and neurobiological causes for boredom are bracketed out from any judgement, and cannot serve any purpose in the phenomenological, *i.e.* transcendental articulation of the phenomenon.

Can Edmund Husserl, Heidegger's teacher, who was rightfully reproached by his famous student for the misleading absolutization of *theoretical* comportment, serve here as an appropriate starting point for entering the realm of what appears to be highly evasive and unfit for either noetic or noematic description? Indeed he can. Edmund Husserl enjoys a well-deserved reputation for being the leading authority on the philosophical analysis of the phenomenon or concept of time consciousness. His analyses on the temporality of consciousness remain a complex and highly topical issue, which is obviously evinced by an outburst of interpretations coming from the contemporary phenomenological community. The present paper has no intention of coming to grips with this hardly manageable production of texts, whose primary concern is to elucidate Husserl's own interpretations in their developmental aspect.⁶ Instead, it wishes to initiate a train of thought, which is in this respect, as well as in the phenomenological community of today, rarer, although clearly anticipated by Husserl himself, who in *Cartesian Meditations*, at the end of the Second Meditation, says that "an enormous task is foreshadowed, which is that of transcendental phenomenology as a whole: the task of carrying out of all phenomenological investigations within the unity of a systematic and all-embracing order" (1982: 54). By making use of his conceptual apparatus on time consciousness, the paper wishes to address

⁶ In recent years, phenomenological research on Husserl's analyses of time has mushroomed all over the world, the reason for it being Husserl's originality and power of insight as well as the publication of his later manuscripts on the nature of time. See Husserl (2001), (2005). See also E. Husserl and R. Bernet, *Texte Zur Phänomenologie Des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)*; R. Bernet, "Die neue Phänomenologie des Zeitbewusstseins in Husserls Bernauer Manuskripten", in Hüni & Trawny (2002). See also Lohmar & Yamaguchi (2010).

a specific phenomenon left unaddressed by the father of phenomenology: the phenomenon of boredom.

Two basic notions of his phenomenology of time, despite its indisputable complexity, are those of *Gegenwärtigung* and *Vergegenwärtigung*, rendered in English as original presentation and presentification or non-original presentation.⁷ Husserl's perhaps most original insight can be attributed to his analysis of the temporal dimension of original presentation, which rests on the present moment or the now of sense perception.⁸ Consider for example the following passage from his *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*:

That all reality lies in the indivisible now-point, that in phenomenology everything ought to be reduced to this point, these are sheer fictions and lead to absurdities. In phenomenology we don't have to do with objective time but with the data of adequate perception. This requires us to consider perceptions, with their appearing now, past, and future, as given. (1991: 174)

Husserl here most seriously, as well as convincingly, challenges the (widely accepted) mathematical conception of time, which is understood as succession of time points. Contrary to mathematical "belief", "the *now* is as little a fictitious mathematical time point as the 'previous tone', as the first or second tone before the now or after it. Each now rather has its perceptible extension, which is something that can be confirmed" (1991, 172). This temporal field of the now is a peculiar phenomenality, which can be "philosophically read" from (rather than into, as done by mathematicians) the actual perceptual experience, in this case perceiving a melody.

One may well wonder why devote attention to Husserl's analysis of the perceptual level of consciousness, presentation, which evinces an extendedness of the now (primal impression) retentionally into the immediate past (the no longer now) and, protentionally, into immediate future (the not yet now)? In this context, is there actually anything Husserl can contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of boredom, which can be considered as something which *altogether evades and escapes* the original temporal field of the now?

On the level of perceptual experience there belongs to the intentional essence of time consciousness a tripartite unity of primal impression, retention (or primary memory) and protention (primary expectation). Without going into too much detail here, we could claim that this is the so-called spontane-

⁷ See Cairns (1973: 59 and 123). We could, for the sake of clarity, also speak of presentation and representation.

⁸ One should not forget that Husserl devotes a great deal of attention to perception, and his views have been highly influential. Compare, for example, Merleau-Ponty (2002).

ous living present, which is to be distinguished from the level of non-original presentation or re-presentation (or reproduction), which demands the faculty of active recollection (or secondary memory) and expectation. If the former belongs to the experiential realm of spontaneity, where consciousness can only passively (presently) experience the shading-off of the perceived object into the past, the latter introduces the realm of freedom: “*A priori* the re-presentation of an experience lies within the domain of my freedom” (1991, 44). Or better still:

The original appearing and the flowing away of the running-off modes in the appearing is something fixed, something of which we are conscious through “affection” at which we can only look (if we happen to achieve the spontaneity of looking). Re-presenting, on the other hand, is something free, a free running through: We can carry out the re-presentation “more quickly” or “more slowly”, more distinctly and explicitly or more confusedly, in a single lightning-like stroke or in articulated steps, and so on. (1991, 49–50)

What about boredom? In boredom, time seems to drag to a halt; there is nothing worthy of noticing here. To put it in Husserl’s terms, there appears to be no temporal flow or process of continual sinking in time; furthermore, there is nothing specially worthy of remembering, and nothing generating expectations, be they heightened or diminished, since everything is and remains the same. In boredom, we experience the unbearable state of being stuck in this all-the-sameness. Surprisingly, the last two sentences reveal the temporal truth of being bored. To put it succinctly, what happens in boredom is the collapse of presentation into representation. Better still, original, or primal, consciousness, which is thrown into the living, attention-gripping present, fails to be affected by anything streaming forth in the temporal flow, and is devoured and completely overwhelmed by reproductive consciousness.

What exactly does this mean? And what does this all-the-same-ness of reproductive consciousness bring along that it consumes the living present? Actually, there are two collapses taking place here, and the collapse of the now is the consequence of another, more crucial collapse: the future and past, belonging to the reproductive consciousness rather than primal consciousness, *collapse into each other*. The secondary expectation becomes the secondary memory. What we expect to happen (coming from the future), has already happened (sunk into the past). The future *is* the past. And if what is about to happen, has always already happened, then the now itself, with its peculiarly extended temporal field, shrinks and fades away, too. If nothing new lurks on the horizon of the future, then protention as the primary expectation becomes one with the secondary expectation, which “claims and knows in advance” that what it is about to encounter is equal to what it has already witnessed. And if nothing new sinks into immediate past, then consciousness

fails to be gripped by the adumbration of the primal impression sinking in time, and there is nothing there to be retained as memorable. Representation prevails over presentation, exactly because the past becomes the future and the future always, in advance, presents (or better represents) the past.

Through the more or less skilful appropriation of Husserl's conceptual framework, we have grasped the (temporal) *eidōs* of one of the primary traits of boredom: indifference.⁹ The re-appropriation of Husserl's phenomenology of time enables us to see a more compelling and richer meaning of boredom as indifference, or surrender to uninterest. There is no difference between the future and the past, between the now and the always, whence profound lack of interest on the side of the consciousness. A passage from Husserl's time book, of course indirectly and unintentionally, corroborates what we have just said:

The consciousness of time is therefore an objectivating consciousness. Without identification and differentiation, without the positing of the now, the positing of the past, the positing of the future, etc. [there would be] no enduring, no resting and changing, no being in succession and so on. That is to say: Without all of this, the absolute "content" remains blind, does not signify objective being, duration, etc. And here too belongs the distinction between presentation and re-presentation. Something exists in objective time. Something! (1991: 308)

We say unintentionally because Husserl never seriously tackled the troublesome issue at hand.¹⁰ Still, "without [...] differentiation" strongly implies that without differentiation there is no difference, due to which consciousness, sunk into indifference, "remains blind" to "enduring, resting and changing, being in succession".

The comparison with Jean-Luc Marion's analysis of boredom in his *God without Being* could not be more suitable and rewarding here (especially in view of his explicit mention of Husserl's notion of retention), with the only difference that in Marion's text blindness is replaced with deafness – and, surprisingly, all the more appropriate for Husserl's detailed analysis and extensive use of the example of the perception of the melody:

For boredom [...] remains deaf, even to what it hears. If there is no greater deafness than in the one who does not want to hear, then no deaf person hears less than boredom. What it hears it gives no attention to, no intention, no retention. Its characteristic function indeed consists in provoking indifference to every provocation, especially to a strong provocation, especially to essential invocation. Boredom suspends the claim, and above all that of Being, because

⁹ Indifference is rendered in Slovenian as "ravnodušnost", which means literally "flatness (sl. "raven") of the soul (sl. "duša"). Interestingly, it corresponds to the English adjective "flat", which means dull, unexciting and uninteresting.

¹⁰ On this see Biceaga (2006).

it has no function or definition other than this very suspension. (Marion 1991: 117)

If Husserl adamantly claims that the intentional structure of consciousness is an essence belonging (universally) to each and every individual subject, the peculiar nature of boredom reveals that there remains an experiential field for consciousness, which evinces a definitive collapse of intentionality, and thereby proves his universal claim wrong.

This is why we are now obliged to move a step forward from Husserl's phenomenology, which – of course rewardingly – resulted in a compelling insight into the temporal (and thereby essential) truth of the phenomenon of boredom.

III. Boredom and Heidegger

What does this moving beyond the transcendental approach imply? So far we have endeavoured to show that the truth of boredom cannot be fruitfully revealed by simply unearthing factors external to its nature. Instead, we offered a transcendental phenomenological approach, which presupposes a bracketing out of all external (objective) reality and calls for a step back to the thing itself, *i.e.* for a detailed eidetic description of subjective experience itself. This, however, has led us astray from the factual life experience and catapulted us into phenomenological attitude (as opposed to natural attitude), which seems to acquire an ahistorical, non-temporal perspective.

It is high time now to move to hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger. In other words, the blind spot in Husserl's universal *eidōs* (essence) of intentionality proves to be the non-universal, irreducibly human quality which belongs to the finitude of time and history. And this is one of Heidegger's major and bitter reproaches to the philosophy of transcendental idealism, namely that it fails to bespeak the individuality in its rootedness in time and history as well as facticity of life.¹¹ With this, Heidegger's phenomenology decidedly moves away from Husserl's phenomenology. And this is perhaps most clearly visible in his famous (and as of yet unsurpassed) treatise on boredom.

At the very beginning of part 1, paragraph 16 (1995: 95), Heidegger adamantly claims that in order to bespeak the attunement of boredom, this requires an awakening of the attunement rather than ascertaining it as something at hand (Gr. *vorhanden*, rendered as present-at-hand) and continues even more decisively:

¹¹ See Heidegger (2001: 174): "Facticity is not the factuality of the *factum brutum* of something present-at-hand, but a characteristic of *Dasein's* being – one which has been taken up into existence."

We can see already that any so-called objective ascertaining of a fundamental attunement is a dubious, indeed impossible undertaking. Accordingly, it is also meaningless to ask in general about the pervasiveness and universality of attunement or to brood over the universal validity of something ascertained in this way. (1995: 60)

The eidetic evidence as the temporal essence of boredom, which we derived from Husserl's phenomenological approach, could very well be the primary target of Heidegger's criticism here. The essence of boredom, objectively ascertained and laying claim on universality, obviously leads astray from the truth of boredom. Any *eidos* which is present-at-hand for the meditating subject, according to Heidegger, loses sight of boredom exactly in that it fails to awaken – boredom. Through obtaining possession¹² of objective, present-at-hand evidence, we actually manage to but escape boredom, we let it fall asleep rather than become possessed by it. What we are required to do is assume the “methodological directive for the interpretation of becoming bored: avoiding the approach of an analysis of consciousness, and maintaining the immediacy of everyday *Dasein*” (1995, 88).¹³

It is the need to *awaken* boredom rather than setting it out as an object of thought that presupposes our surrendering to it or letting ourselves be possessed by it. In no other way can we, says Heidegger, come any nearer its basic truth. And the need to awaken boredom clearly implies Heidegger's method of approaching this evasive phenomenality. As the chapter titles 2, 3 and 4 from Part 1 patently show, the sequence of three forms of boredom under scrutiny is highly telling: Heidegger advances from the first form of boredom, (1995: 78) “Becoming Bored by Something”, through the second form, (1995: 106) “Being Bored with Something” and ends with the final, fundamental, deepest form, (1995: 132) “Profound Boredom as ‘It Is Boring for One’”.

The first, most superficial form of boredom, which describes the most common, everyday experience of the tedious waiting for a train at a remote train station and constantly looking at the watch, seems to bring us back to what we have previously managed to bracket out; namely the world out there: the desolate train station is what causes us to be bored. But this, of course, only seems so. The world for Heidegger – this is one of his “precious inheritances” from Husserl – is not an entirety of things out there, from without

¹² We hereby hint at the original meaning of the Greek word *ousia*, essence, which bears the meaning of possession.

¹³ Heidegger, in the need to distance himself from Husserl, and not only Husserl, no longer uses the concept of the subject; instead, he uses the concept *Dasein* as being-there. If he does employ the notion of subject, he does it only for the purpose of severe criticism. For the difference between the two, see M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Division One.

the subject as that which is “within itself”. Rather, *Dasein* is, as he time and again reiterates, always already being-in-the-world. The latter, as an existentiale, forms the basic mode of existence of *Dasein*. This explains, as well as excuses, the awkward use of hyphens. It only seems that Heidegger explains boredom from out of boring things, because he clearly states that boredom comes neither solely from without, as caused by boring objects, nor solely from within, as transferred from us on the objects: “These characteristics [the boringness] are on the one hand objective ones, taken from the objects themselves, from out of them, yet at the same time subjective ones, and according to the common explanation transferred from subjects onto objects” (1995, 85). And because it neither comes from objects nor is transferred to them, and is obviously a *tertium datur*, the traditional categories of cause-effect and transference fail to grasp the peculiar nature of boredom.

And yet, still, he begins with things which bore us; with the most common, superficial form of boredom, experienced in most ordinary, everyday situations. The fundamental shift underlying this moving away from his teacher’s phenomenological approach (of first reducing the entirety to the subjective flux) is his distancing from the primacy of the theoretical comportment, which is done, as many a contemporary scholar readily admits,¹⁴ with the help of Aristotle. Heidegger’s attention to everyday, or pre-philosophical, comportment of *Dasein*, from which he advances to the self-understanding of philosophy, his (phenomenological) hermeneutics of facticity, is a “logical” consequence of his affirmation of the primacy of non-theoretical, i.e. practical comportments.¹⁵ The second crucial aspect, as implicit it might be in the book on boredom, for drawing a more or less sharp distinction between the two phenomenologists, is Heidegger’s persistence on the fundamentality of attunement or mood, already expressed in his magnum opus:

A mood assails us. It comes neither from “outside” nor from “inside”, but arises out of being-in-the-world, as a way of such being. But with the negative distinction between state-of-mind and the reflective apprehending of something “within”, we have thus reached a positive insight into their character as disclosure. *The mood has always already disclosed, in every case, being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something.* (2001, 176)¹⁶

The three forms of boredom coincide with the tripartite (2001: 169) “unitary primordial structure of *Dasein*’s being”: being-in-the-world. To be able to see this more clearly, we should first explicate the existentiale to its fullness: being-in-the-world is *Dasein*’s-being-in-the-world-of-things. The

¹⁴ On this see Volpi (1984); Kisiel (1995); Brogan (2005).

¹⁵ On this see Heidegger (2001).

¹⁶ One cannot fail noticing how totally un- and counter-Husserlian this sounds!

first form of boredom, the most ordinary, everyday form of boredom, being bored by something, coincides with the third element of being-in-the-world: being bored by (things of) the world. The second form, as ordinary as the first one, coincides with the first element of the existential structure: *Dasein* as being bored with, for example, a party. With it, as boredom “moves” from things to *Dasein*, we are already witnessing a certain deepening, or better, broadening of boredom:

In becoming bored by something [first form – J. L.] we are precisely still held fast by that which is boring, we do not yet let it go. [...] In being bored with [second form – J. L.] ... the boredom is no longer nailed fast to something, but is already beginning to diffuse. Boredom has then not arisen from this particular thing, on the contrary it radiates out over and beyond particular boring things. [...] It settles over several things: everything becomes boring. (1995: 92)

And the last, third form of boredom, which for Heidegger implies the most fundamental truth of boredom, profound boredom, coincides with the central element, the very “being-in” of *Dasein*’s existence. So far, by establishing the difference between the first two forms of boredom, “we have also already indicated the *direction* in which boredom *becomes more profound*” (1995: 133).

What we need to do now to proceed in the more proper manner (proper to the essence of boredom) is, as with the help of Husserl in the previous chapter, to press forward to the essence of time. Time in the first two forms of boredom should be considered in the sense of passing the time which comes as a nuisance. By passing the time in being bored by or with something, we try to escape boredom and “time becoming drawn out, becoming long” (1995: 78). Profound boredom, however, betrays its overpowering nature in that it no longer permits us to even attempt to pass the drawn out or long time.¹⁷ What are then the basic traits of profound boredom, which reveal themselves in their overpowering moment? Two structural moments which most readily fit profound boredom are those of being left empty and being held in limbo.¹⁸ With these two notions we can at the very first instant see what Heidegger means by saying that the attunement of boredom should be awakened, or that we should let it be awake. Both of them namely bespeak as well as arouse the *feeling*, or more appropriately, attunement of emptiness and being caught in an unsolvable situation. What exactly happens in this situation we find ourselves (unwillingly) in? Heidegger says poignantly: we are stuck in being left empty because *Dasein* is delivered over to the entirety of beings, *in which Dasein experiences beings as a whole in their refusal* (1995:

¹⁷ “Passing the long time” as escaping this time, if we consider the German notion of boredom, *Langeweile*, long time or long while, actually coincides with “escaping boredom”.

¹⁸ English renderings of Heidegger’s concepts of *Leergelassenheit* and *Hingehaltenheit*.

137). This self-refusal of beings is understood as their indifference. And *Dasein* itself is no exception here, since it, as a being, belongs to the entirety of beings: “Beings have become indifferent as a whole, and we ourselves as these people are not excepted. [...] We find ourselves in the midst of beings as a whole, i.e. in the whole of this indifference” (1995: 138). And this indifference is the essential truth of being left empty, which means that, in this attunement, beings in their entirety do not disappear; rather, they “show themselves precisely as such in their indifference” (1995: 138).

The second structural moment constituting the essence of profound boredom is that of being held in limbo. What does this being left in the lurch imply? Heidegger says: “Simultaneously something else shows itself: there occurs the dawning of the possibilities that *Dasein* could have, but which are left unexploited precisely in this ‘it is boring for one’, and as unexploited leave us in the lurch” (1995: 141). Thus, ultimately, being left empty (where beings in their indifference fail to address us) structurally corresponds to being left in limbo (the situation points to the possibilities unavoidably left unexploited).

How could we then relate this troublesome issue to time? “There is nothing to be found here of time. Just as in general this third form of boredom has nothing of an explicit time-relatedness in itself. [...] One is rather almost tempted to say that in this ‘it is boring for one’ one feels timeless, one feels removed from the flow of time” (1995: 141).

Here we have come full circle; or better, back to what we have ourselves managed to ascertain with the help of Husserl’s phenomenological approach. But, to put it in a nutshell, this circle has closed only seemingly. For not only do the two approaches differ in that the former first *brackets out* the factual everyday situation in which we are usually thrown in boredom, and tries to grasp the universally applicable essence of boredom, freed from factual existence; and that the latter *fully embraces* the everydayness of existence in order to be able to penetrate to a deeper level of the superficially the same. The difference, despite the palpably similar temporal truth of boredom, also consists in the result. If the former approach seeks to acquire possession of the *eidos* or essence of boredom as something present-at-hand in order to be able to grasp reality *and at the same time step beyond it, over the natural rootedness in being and non-being*, and into the transcendental realm of absolute freedom (as well as immortality); the latter endeavours to awaken the attunement so that the result, profound boredom, awakened from sleep, is deliberately desired as the necessary prerequisite for stepping out of boredom as the entrancement with temporality as such, which “impels *Dasein* into the moment of vision as the properly authentic possibility of its existence” (1995: 153). In other words, boredom in its essence is not at all freely repeatable and representable (in

Husserlian fashion); it is, rather, that into which we are thrown and always already permeated with, because being thrown into boredom means being entranced by the horizon of temporality as such.

With this, the phenomenological “story” of boredom – with these two differences between the two phenomenological approaches, which have been more or less successfully unearthed in talking the phenomenon of boredom – comes to a close. The richness of both phenomenologies, that of Husserl and Heidegger, namely prevents us to delve into further issues, which exceed the framework of the present treatise not only in its subject matter, but also, and primarily, in its extent. It is, however, quite possible to at least hint at the possible direction of further broadening the horizon of the difference between the two authors. What Heidegger seeks to achieve with his analysis of boredom (however impalpable this might seem to be) is to think the entire history of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche, Husserl being no exception here, as the history of metaphysics, which, as he poignantly says in his *European Nihilism*, is none other than the history of growing nihilism. And what else is his profound boredom than the diagnosis of the final stage of the European human condition, in which the highest ideals of Socratic philosophy, together with beings in their entirety, start to withdraw, suspend themselves, reveal themselves in their indifference, in their nothingness, *nihil*.¹⁹ In Heidegger’s poignant words:

Have things ultimately gone so far with us that a *profound* boredom draws back and forth like a silent fog in the abysses of *Dasein*? (1995: 80)

IV. Conclusion

Initially, we tried to dismantle the insufficient and misleading truth of boredom as exemplified by neuroscientific approach. It turns out that this vein of thought rests too heavily of the one-sided understanding of Descartes. The one-sidedness and improperness of the approach can be demonstrated with Descartes himself, as well as with a more appropriate approach found in the Cartesian, transcendental thinker Husserl, seen as the founder of phenomenology. By employing his phenomenological method of reduction, and eidetic description, we have attained a phenomenological insight into the essence of boredom, which can be compellingly articulated in unearthing

¹⁹ In this respect, and crucially related to Husserl’s absolute consciousness, which could be understood as intimately related to genuine boredom, see Biceaga (2006). Another useful aspect related to boredom opens up if the eschatological concept of the progress in history is compared to the phenomenological understanding of the history of Being. In this case “the arrival at the end is actually a return to the beginning. There is no progress. There is no redemption, no fusion of existence and meaning.” See Svetlič (2011: 517).

its temporal sense. Yet, this approach, whose ambition is to reach the universal truth, fails exactly in that the truth of boredom evinces a definitive collapse of intentionality, and thereby proves its universal claim wrong. The collapse of the universal therefore calls for a return to the individuality of factual existence, which is one of the excelling traits of the phenomenology of Heidegger. This is the reason why his insights gained into the essence of boredom through hermeneutic phenomenology of facticity have revealed an even more proper essence of boredom. At the same time, the discussion of the same specific phenomenon has more or less successfully pointed at crucial differences between Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.

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