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Listening to Boredom in Heidegger

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In his lecture course of 1929-30, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger proposes a strange path to philosophy: boredom (*Langeweile*). And while he gives an extended analysis of boredom therein, his proposal is that the philosopher must begin, not with such an analysis, but by experiencing boredom itself. That is, boredom is that condition through which the proper subject matter of philosophy is disclosed to us in a way that makes possible the most fundamental sorts of philosophical reflection. To understand this remarkable proposal, in what follows I will trace its background in Heidegger's philosophy of emotion in *Being and Time*, before explicating his views on the nature and varieties of boredom, and on what it is that this normally hateful emotion can reveal to us.

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I. Emotion and disclosure

Central to Heidegger's views in *Being and Time* is the notion that Dasein's nature is to exist, in a peculiar sense of the term. Put another way, all the things we undertake to do are aspects of a single activity: that of asking and answering the question of who to be.¹⁾ It's in the context of this view that our emotions take center stage—especially, certain ones we usually struggle to avoid and escape.

To see this, consider first how Heidegger thinks we answer the question of who to be. For example, by forming beliefs, I opt to be someone who embraces certain views of what things are like. By making choices, I opt to be someone who exercises my intentional agency in a certain way. Or, by comporting myself particular ways - through the nuances of my gesture, movement, and stance - I opt for particular modes of embodiment. In such cases, I answer the question of who to be by being some particular way: believing this, intending that, carrying myself bodily in such-and-such a manner.

However, we don't exist in a vacuum. Rather, existence is, as Heidegger puts it, being-in-the-world. This isn't, though, the banal observation that we

1) Martin Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit*. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 1967); and *Being and Time*. John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson, trans. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1965). This is the unifying theme of *Being and Time's* entire analytic of Dasein. My formulation of it here, though, is most directly based on Heidegger's introductory formulation of it in ¶9, when he says that "The 'essence' of this entity lies in its 'to be,'" "in its existence" (p. 42/p. 67), and that "[b]ecause Dasein has in each case mineness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it : 'I am', 'you are'" (p. 42/p. 68). (Note that in references to *Being and Time*, I will refer to the book using the abbreviation BT, and page numbers in both the German and English editions referenced in the bibliography, divided by a slash, where the numbers before the slashes indicate page numbers in the former, and the numbers after the slashes indicate page numbers in the latter.)

- like the rock, the tree, or the Andromeda galaxy - have locations in space. Quite the contrary: as Heidegger means the term, only Dasein is in the world. We're in the world, that is, in a sense similar to that in which we can be in a conversation or in love: i.e. engaged with it. Our basic relation to the world is as beings who must deal with it in order to figure out who to be in it. And, figuring out who to be is what matters to us most fundamentally: not, though, because it matters to us more than anything else, but rather because its mattering to us is that in virtue of which anything else at all matters to us. It's because our own existence matters to us that the world does.²⁾

The manner in which it does is, in turn, the key to how we ask the question of who to be - i.e. figure out which answers to give it. Such answers depend, that is, on the specific ways in which the things we deal with matter for us. Any belief or intention is grounded in some sense for which considerations matter for determining what's true or what is to be done. The way we comport our bodies is grounded in some sense for which forms of bodily expressiveness are appropriate. Existence in this way requires getting a grip on what matters: what's at issue for us in the particular questions about who to be that we face - what to believe, what to do, how to carry ourselves. In an important sense, then, understanding the world is understanding ourselves - specifically, what Heidegger calls our facticity (*Faktizität*): the stakes of our own particular existence.

What enables us to get a grip on what matters is disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*). The world must be disclosed to us, must fall within our purview, for us to grasp what matters in it. Thus, the world's disclosedness is at the same time that of our own facticity. In this dual disclosedness, we

2) Cf. BT ¶12 (p. 52-59/p. 78-86).

play an active role, crafting interpretations of how things matter. However, we can only do so because we receive an initial sense for what matters from the world itself. How things matter must show up to us in some provisional, perception-like way that provides for us the ultimate basis for any interpretation thereof.

Heidegger calls this receptivity findingness (*Befindlichkeit*).³⁾ Compositionally, the German term means something like ‘self-finding’. We find ourselves in the world, in a sense related to certain uses of the word. First, this self-finding is a matter of assessment or evaluation, as in the question “How did you find your meal?”. Our findingness is, in part, a matter of having an overall sense for what the world we’re dealing with is like, evaluatively speaking. Such a sense is self-evaluative in that it conveys to us a sense for our own facticity. That is, in characterizing the overall situation with which we must contend, it conveys to us a view of ‘how it’s going’ for us, ‘where we’re at’ in our existence. Second, we find ourselves finding ourselves in this latter sense. That is, we find ourselves with the overall sense we have in something like the way we might find ourselves sailing through the air after being hurled by a catapult. Indeed, Heidegger employs just such a metaphor: we’re thrown (*geworfen*) into a particular sense for the world and our facticity that isn’t of our own making.

It’s here where emotions come into the picture - namely, as concrete

3) Cf. BT ¶¶28-30 (p. 130-42/p. 168-82). Although McQuarrie and Robinson translate *Befindlichkeit* as “state-of-mind”, it is widely agreed that this is a poor translation. What to replace it with, though, is a matter of considerable variation. Because I draw below on how the connotations of the German *find* can illuminate the concept, I therefore use John Haugeland’s translation, “findingness”. Cf. John Haugeland. *Dasein Disclosed: John Haugeland’s Heidegger*. Joseph Rouse, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 154.

manifestations of findingness. For example, when I'm gripped by fear at the edge of a cliff, this is a way in which things in the world strike me as mattering, such that I find myself faced with specific stakes. In the first instance, the cliff and the abyss beyond it seem dangerous. But my fear isn't a matter of disinterestedly observing that they are. Rather, to fear them is for their dangerousness to show up to me as a threat - as something that raises a set of issues for me: e.g. my safety, and how to protect it; my dignity, and whether retreating will undermine it. This helps us to see that, although the immediate objects of my fear are the cliff and the abyss, my fear shapes my sense for my situation as a whole. The ground before the cliff's edge seems precarious, the path at my back seems to invite escape, my body seems cravenly weak, and so on. Through our particular emotions - our attunements (*Stimmungs*) to the world - both we and the world are disclosed in a provisional way: i.e. we get our first blush impressions of what matters in the world, and thus of our own facticity.

II. Listening to emotions against the grain

Not all emotions, though, are created equal. Many only convey the stakes of particular situations: my fear of this cliff, my frustration at the final weeks of the election, my joy seeing my son's childhood unfold over the years. However, others cut deeper: fundamental attunements (*Grundstimmungs*) that convey to us the stakes of our existence as such. Such attunements don't simply provide one avenue of conveyance among others. Rather, they're our only routes to genuine insight on such matters. And this is because such insight isn't a matter of the intellect, but of the heart. My safety doesn't show

up as an issue for me when I merely observe the danger of the cliff, but only because I'm gripped by some emotion: e.g. fear or cautiousness. And so, the mere observer of danger can't really understand, because they don't feel, the stakes of the threat that it poses. Likewise for the stakes of our overall situation as beings who exist: they don't really hit us, and so we don't really understand them, unless we're attuned to that situation in the right way. To get real insight on our existence, Heidegger thinks, we must be gripped by certain emotions.

However, this poses a special challenge. Although such emotions hold a unique revelatory power, they also tend to undermine it: they propel us to flee from the very sense for our situation they convey. So, 'hearing' what they're 'telling us' requires learning how not to submit to this propulsive force - how to 'listen' to certain emotions against their own grain. This, in turn, requires attending to and understanding the very ways in which we flee them - 'shout them down' or 'turn away'. For often, we're only obliquely aware we're fleeing them at all. When we've worked to accomplish all this, these emotions 'awaken'—or rather, we awaken to what they've been 'saying' all along.⁴ Philosophy, in this way, isn't a mere intellectual exercise. It requires, Heidegger thinks, a tutelage of the emotions—learning precisely how not to deafen ourselves to what they disclose.

4) Martin Heidegger. *Die Grundbegriff der Metaphysik: Welt - Endlichkeit - Einsamkeit (Gesamtausgabe II: Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, band 29/30)*. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1983); and *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). H introduces the language of 'awakening' in sections 16-17 (p. 80-103/p. 59-68). Beginning in section 30 (p. 202/p. 134), he begins to associate such awakening with listening. (Note that I will hereafter refer to *Die Grundbegriff der Metaphysik* using the abbreviation FC, and page numbers in both the German and English editions of according to the format I've been using for BT. Cf. fn. 1.)

In *Being and Time*, he famously proposes anxiety as a fundamental attunement whose hatefulness speaks to our reluctance to face up to its insights. However, as noted above, in the 1929-30 lecture course he proposes boredom as the fundamental attunement for philosophy, and tries to lead us out of our usual evasions from its oppressiveness. Once we learn how to cease such evasions, he thinks, boredom transforms. It's no longer the restless boredom that fidgets during a tedious lecture, or the dead-eyed boredom that zones out on Instagram or Netflix. Instead, it becomes profound - akin to the contented emptiness of the meditator. Through it, we become bored philosophers - not, that is, by finding philosophy boring, but rather by finding philosophy through boredom.

III. Boredom and its discontent

We're all familiar with how we often evade boredom: through passing the time (*Zeitvertreib*).⁵⁾ We twiddle our thumbs, pace, or stare at our phone. What we're trying to evade is, in some sense, the boringness of some boring thing: a work meeting, a conversation, a subway ride. But in what does that boringness consist? Boringness is that character things have in virtue of which they can do something in particular to us: namely, bore us. Thus, to answer this question, Heidegger asks: how does the boring thing affect us so as to solicit the evasion of passing the time? How, in other words, does it matter to us?

His guiding example is having to wait four hours for your train at a

5) Heidegger analyzes this first kind of boredom in FC part I, ch.2 (p. 117-59/p. 78-105).

country rail station. The station is drab, its surroundings bland. There's nowhere else to go, though, in the remaining time, so essentially you're stuck there. The problem is: it bores you. There are, Heidegger argues, two key elements to its doing so. First, you're left empty (*leer gelassen*) by it. This is one of boredom's distinguishing qualities. As we've seen, in many emotions, the specific ways things matter present us with certain issues as ones with which we must deal. As it were, they 'speak to us', 'make demands of us', thereby soliciting our engagement. From the station, though, only an oppressive 'silence': the things therein 'refuse themselves' (*versagt sich*).

Is this just a showy way of saying the station is uninteresting? No. Imagine, *à la* Heidegger, there's a book in your satchel.⁶⁾ You consider reading it, but though you find it interesting, you can't bring yourself to do so. It's as if the refusal of things has spread to your book. This is often how boredom goes. What's normally engaging about things fails to 'call out to us', to draw from us a sense of involvement. Hence, the aptness of the refusal metaphor: the interest things hold for you keeps itself 'mute'.

Because of this, you're left empty. To extend Heidegger's metaphor, existence is a kind of call and response. The ways things speak to us in a given situation, i.e. convey a sense of what matters for us therein, 'fills' us by confronting us with concrete stakes: something with which we must contend in the here and now, and to which our existence must respond. As you're there in the station, then, the 'silence' is deafening. The way in which things there don't matter to you matters a lot. It's a source of disquiet - in a literal sense, but a metaphorical one too: by passing the time, you try to 'shout down' this silence so you don't have to listen to it.⁷⁾ You putter about,

6) FC p. 140/p. 93.

7) FC p. 205/p. 136.

count the trees outside, or doodle in the sand with a stick. You try to drive the boredom away.

To better understand such acts of passing the time, though, we must turn to your boredom's second key element: you're 'held in limbo' (*hingenhalten*) by the 'dragging of time' (*Zögern der Zeit*). As you wait at the train station, time seems to slow. But in what sense? It's not as if you think a minute is now taking two minutes to pass. What would that even mean? Instead, what goes slowly is the time of your life - time, as measured, not by objective units, but by your sense of the progress of your own existence. As we sometimes say, you've been 'held up': you're making little headway in pursuing your concerns. The transition from your last important step to the next one (getting on that train) is unfolding at an agonizing pace.

In response, you try to drive time on (*Zeit antreiben*). What is it, though, to be trying to do this? None of the things you're doing to pass the time seem to you to help you make progress on your concerns. Nothing, we might think, seems genuinely at stake in them. Unless, that is, we consider the curious way in which the things in your surroundings matter to you - by refusing themselves, keeping silent on how they matter at all. In other words, the sense in which you 'shout down' their silence is by feigning a kind of counterfeit engagement. You act as if - like a performance for your own benefit - the trees that you count, the dirt in which you doodle, and so on present to you genuine stakes, so that in the worthlessness of counting and doodling there seems real progress. But the artifice here is transparent, and your frustration grows.

This is one of boredom's distinctive forms of self-obfuscation. As Heidegger sees things, what stands in the way of clarity here is that you take a particular thing - e.g. the station as you wait for your train - to be what

bores you. For this reason, he calls it being bored by (*Gelangweiltwerden*) something. Because you attribute your boredom to a local source, so to speak, you take up local strategies to deal with the ‘fluttering unease’ that it brings: you search for particular, ersatz stakes to substitute for those that this particular situation refuses you. In doing so, you fail to hear what boredom has to tell you, which concerns no particular thing, no particular stakes, but the world itself and the stakes of your existence as such therein.

We begin to approach what boredom has to tell us through another of its forms: being bored with (*Sichlangweilen bei*) something.⁸⁾ This approach occurs, though, through a heightened confusion - like the moment when, having hitherto overlooked a sound completely, it begins to emerge for us, but only as a garble we can’t yet pin down. As suggested by the German, we bore ourselves in this kind of boredom. However, we don’t do so in the same sense as the station does in the previous example. We don’t find ourselves boring. Indeed, in this kind of boredom, there is no particular boring thing, though our boredom is tied to a particular situation.

Let’s consider a version of Heidegger’s own example: you go to a party. While you’re there, all of it seems pleasant enough: the food is tasty, the company congenial, the music fine. However, once you go home, you realize: the whole time, you were bored. Clearly, it wasn’t the same sort of boredom as you experienced in the train station. The evening was filled, not with frustration, but with casual ease. And this was because you were there of your own volition. You didn’t feel stuck there, as you did at the station. Quite the contrary: you went there seeking refuge from the weight of your concerns - to forget them and blow off some steam. As you do sometimes on the internet,

8) Heidegger analyzes this second form of boredom in FC part I, ch.3 (p. 160-98/p. 106-31).

or in front of the TV, at the party you found respite in zoning out.

What does this second kind of boredom have in common with the first? There is, of course, the lack of engagement, the artifice. You go with the flow and join in on what others are doing: idle chit-chat, smoking cigars, sipping drinks. But nothing you're doing at the party seems really at stake for you. The activity of one moment is forgotten the next. In that sense, you're still left empty by the whole affair. However, the emptiness here is different from that of the station. It seems to 'grow from the depths' (*wächst aus der Tiefe*), as if forming itself. And this is because it doesn't issue from the refusal of things. You can't pin it on anything at the party: again, nothing there strikes you as boring. Rather, its 'self-forming' quality is due to the fact that you're not looking for engagement: nothing can be refused where nothing is sought.

As we sometimes say, you've 'taken time out' to be there. Taken it out from where? Again, this is nonsense if we understand it in terms of objective time. You can't slice off a period of time from the timeline and transport it elsewhere the way you can cut off a segment from a length of string. Instead, you've taken some time from the time of your life: 'pressed the pause button' on the pursuit of your own most pressing concerns. As Heidegger puts it, you let the time of your life 'stand', held in limbo again. Objective time, of course, keeps passing, but in your experience you don't notice the ticking of the minutes and hours: we 'lose track of' time when we're zoning out.

In zoning out, Heidegger thinks, we're on the cusp of realizing boredom's true essence - of listening to what it's telling us about the stakes of our own existence. When we attend to its phenomenology, we see vividly that no particular boring thing is what really bores us. The source of boredom, instead, concerns the nature of time - the time of our lives. What obstructs real insight here, though, is a 'casualness' whose locus is a different way of passing the

time. We immerse ourselves in activities in which nothing is at stake for us. However, when we do so, we aren't 'shouting down' an oppressive refusal of things as time drags. When we zone out, there's an oppressiveness to which we've been abandoned, yes. However, it's one to which we've abandoned ourselves. We 'check out' from the concerns that matter most to us. In passing the time, we 'pass them by': we sustain the stasis, the 'standing' of time. Our own meaningless activity is the means by which we sustain it: that with which, in the end, we are bored. We don't shout, but still we turn away, refusing to listen.

IV. Listening to the silence

To what is it that we refuse to listen? To something we obscure in the first two kinds of boredom - a 'silence' that is 'telling' of a deep insight. There's a third kind of boredom, Heidegger thinks, which he calls profound boredom (*tiefe Langeweile*), in which all attempts at evasion cease.⁹⁾ What would that boredom be like, though, in which we neither shout down nor turn away from the silence? And what is that silence, exactly?

I suggest that the best model for profound boredom is, as I hinted above, meditative boredom.¹⁰⁾ As aptly expressed by Sylvia Boorstein's pithy

9) Heidegger's analyzes profound boredom in FC part I, chs.4-5 (p. 199-250/p. 132-67).

10) It should be pointed out here that this is my own interpretive posit. Heidegger himself doesn't make this suggestion in FC. My suggestion that profound boredom can be understood in terms of meditation can, I believe, be evaluated on its own merits in comparison with the text. However, I am drawing on the notion that Heidegger's notion of profound boredom in FC can be instructively read as prefiguring his later reflections on 'meditative thought', e.g. in Martin Heidegger. *Country Path Conversations*. Bret W. Davis, trans. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010).

inversion of the old saying, the guiding principle of certain forms of meditation is: “Don’t just do something, sit there!”¹¹⁾ The hallmark of such meditation is a kind of inaction. All busyness whatsoever is relinquished. In particular, and more to the present point, we no longer permit ourselves the distraction of passing the time. We silence the fidgeting of both body and mind. Patiently, we linger in this silence, and listen passively to what’s left behind in fidgeting’s wake.^{12)·13)}

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- 11) Cf. Sylvia Boorstein. *Don't Just Do Something, Sit There: A Mindfulness Retreat*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996). Of course, the term “meditation” is used to describe a wide variety of practices from many different traditions, and thus is difficult to define. For the present purposes, though, I believe it suffices to reflect on the loose collection of meditative practices that have, in a somewhat *ad hoc* way, come to be described under the moniker ‘mindfulness’ in contemporary popular culture. Hence, my reference to Sylvia Boorstein’s influential popular introduction to mindfulness.
- 12) To be clear, I’m not suggesting that meditation is the only route to what Heidegger calls profound boredom. Heidegger himself makes very clear, for example, that profound boredom can strike one at odd moments—e.g. while walking through the streets of a large city on a Sunday afternoon (FC p. 204/p. 135). Instead, I suggest that when profound boredom strikes us in other situations, our condition is akin to meditative states in important respects. Indeed, it’s commonplace among practitioners of meditation to recognize the states they achieve as akin to rare moods that have otherwise struck them at random moments in the way that Heidegger describes. Jan Slaby finds a wealth of examples of profound boredom that I believe can be instructively compared with meditative boredom in Fernando Pessoa’s literary masterpiece *The Book of Disquiet*. Cf. Jan Slaby, “The other side of existence: Heidegger on boredom”, in *Habitus in Habitat II – Other Sides of Cognition*. Sabine Flach, Daniel Margulies and Jan Söffner, eds. (Berlin: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2010), p. 101-120; Jan Slaby, “Living in the Moment: Boredom and the Meaning of Existence in Heidegger and Pessoa”, in *Yearbook for Eastern and Western Philosophy*, vol. 2. Hans Feger, Xie Dikun, Wang Ge and Hilge Landweer, eds. (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2017), p. 235-256; and Fernando Pessoa. *The Book of Disquiet: The Complete Edition*. Jerónimo Pizarro, ed. Margaret Jull Costa, trans. (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2017).
- 13) It’s worth pointing out here that the silence of boredom in FC can be instructively compared with the inarticulacy of anxiety that paves the way for us to hear the call of conscience—what Heidegger in BT calls reticence (cf. especially BT ¶¶33 [p. 153-60/p. 195-203], 40 [p. 184-91/p. 228-35], and 56 [p. 272-3/p. 317-19]). For instructive discussions of Heidegger’s conception of language and discourse, cf. 송현아, 「하이데거 철학에서 대화의 본질」,

Isn't this rather like the second kind of boredom, though? When we zone out on the infinite scroll of some social media app, for example, we're immersed in a kind of passivity, dead-eyed and prone. The use of such apps, it would seem, has become for contemporary people what sitting quietly staring at fires, streams, or unchanging landscapes had been for people of a previous age. And indeed, when we zone out in this way, we are, by Heidegger's lights, closer to profound boredom than when we're fidgeting or in a busy frenzy. However, this is only because we're in a position to see that the true source of boredom isn't something that flies in from outside and assaults us with its boringness. Still, though, for all our languid vacancy when we're sprawled out on the couch staring at our phones, we're still passing the time, refusing to listen. Through the dopamine hits of pressing 'like' at photos, reading sensationalistic headlines, or chortling at jokes, we indulge in the sedation of substitute engagements. Even as we lose minutes or hours escaping our lives, through the very activity with which we escape them, we pretend to ourselves we're making progress - that the stream of trivialities really means something to us. And when we stop, every bit of the infinite scroll forgotten in an instant, we realize we were wrong: none of it meant anything, we were boring ourselves.

In contrast, in profound boredom we leave ourselves naked, completely receptive in something like the meditator's manner. The meditator's paradoxical labor is that of renouncing all effort: letting go of all of their particular concerns, and opening themselves up to something that lay behind them all along. What makes this labor difficult is, of course, the crushing force

『인문과학』 119권, 2020, p. 165-190; and 이은정, 「예언자의 언어와 두 갈래의 시간-언어와 시간에 대한 하이데거와 레비나스의 사유」, 『인문과학』 95권, 2012, p. 183-212.

of boredom—the sense that as they sit there, there are any number of things they’re leaving undone. They are assaulted by the impulse to open their eyes, get up, and get on with their lives. And if they don’t give in to this impulse, another one very much like it is likely to rush in to replace it: the impulse to do something, even as they sit there silent and still—at the very least, to chatter away in their minds. However, if they can ignore this impulse, something remarkable happens: they embrace boredom as something wondrous rather than treating it as an enemy to be vanquished. Their ordinary, particular selves—their projects, their obligations, their trivial fixations—withdraw for a time, and they become contentedly passive: in Heidegger’s terms, hearers rather than doers.¹⁴⁾

Heidegger’s formula for profound boredom, which he repeats like a mantra, is “It is boring for one” (*Es ist einem langweilig*). What is the ‘it’ here – what is it that bores us? “The ‘it,’” he tells us, “that we mean whenever we say that it is thundering and lightening, that it is raining. It – this is the title for whatever is indeterminate, unfamiliar.”¹⁵⁾ No particular thing strikes us as what’s boring us: our particular concerns relinquished, we seek no solicitations of engagements from things. Rather, in an important sense, it’s the world as such that shows up as doing so – the ‘telling refusal of beings as a whole’. Nothing whatsoever calls out to us, conveying to us what matters, and we’re no longer distracted from that silence through our own

14) Elpidirou and Freeman are skeptical that any passing state of boredom is profound enough to play the role of what Heidegger calls profound boredom: i.e. that boredom in ordinary cases doesn’t have its revelatory power. This leads them to be skeptical that the condition Heidegger has in mind can properly be called boredom at all. What I suggest is that they overlook rarer, more difficult kinds of boredom, e.g. the sort involved in successful meditation. Cf. Andreas Elpidorou and Lauren Freeman. “Is Profound Boredom Boredom?” in *Heidegger on Affect*. Christos Hadjioannou, ed. (Cham: Palgrave, 2019), p. 177-204.

15) FC p. 202-3/p. 134.

passing of the time, our own impulses to fidget. Instead, we just dwell there in the revelatory silence, left empty without even feigning any fullness.¹⁶⁾

What is it, though, that this silence reveals? It orients us away from our own facticity – from the particular issues and problems that weigh on us – thereby showing us that there is more to us than this facticity. This isn't to say, though, that there's any such thing for us as escaping existence – from the ongoing project of figuring out who to be. Profound boredom doesn't orient us away from our facticity in order to turn us toward something completely otherwise than existence. Instead, it brings into view something like the form of existence – not this or that concern, thing, or situation to keep us busy, but rather what it is to exist at all. It doesn't bring this into view as something, though, to observe from the viewpoint of a disinterested intellect. Rather, in its silence, we hear what in *Being and Time* Heidegger refers to as the 'call of conscience' (*Ruf des Gewissens*). This call makes no particular demands of us, presents us with no particular stakes. In that sense it is silent: an empty call. Instead, it presses upon us the stakes of existence as such, so that we're gripped by them, moved by them more deeply than any particular threat or promise ever could.¹⁷⁾

These stakes concern the significance of time. As we progress through the three kinds of boredom, the time of our lives transforms. In the first, it drags – slows down to a creep. Then, in the second, as if it's crept to halt, it stands:

16) In this respect, we lose our ordinary world—the world that is disclosed to us through findingness as the one in which things matter to us in particular ways, demanding particular responses from us. Later in FC, H contrasts this 'worldlessness' with that of the animal. As he puts it, the animal is 'world-poor': i.e. it too lacks a particular world. However, what distinguishes Dasein gripped by profound boredom from the animal, he thinks, is that the former experiences the absence of a particular world as a lack: being left empty and in limbo are still essential characteristics of profound boredom. Cf. FC, part II, ch.2ff.

17) BT ¶¶55-7 (p. 270-80/p. 315-25).

its passing becomes utterly inconspicuous for us. Finally, in profound boredom, it's as if we draw back from time altogether: we attain, that is, a sense of timelessness. The time of profound boredom is, in this respect, akin to the eternity of the theologians. Unlike the latter, though, it doesn't promise us liberation from the 'chains' of our own finitude, our facticity. Rather, it attunes us to what that facticity is fundamentally about. That is, as with meditation—especially as conceived in the Buddhist tradition—it helps us to confront the fact that we aren't our selves – aren't reducible to even those things that matter to us most, the concerns that burden us most heavily. In Heidegger's vivid image, it's as if the whole course of the time of our lives unfolds before us, like an all-encompassing chorus: the past from which we've been 'thrown', the here and now, and the future into which we 'project' ourselves, anticipating what we shall be in the time to come. When it does, we're again empty and held in limbo.

However, unlike in the first two kinds of boredom, this emptiness and limbo don't strike us as products of some particular situation. Instead, we recognize in them our fundamental being – the being of Dasein, of 'being there'. Always, we grapple with our facticity, but in this awakened attunement, we feel in our bones its fragility – the essential provisionality of even the deepest convictions. For us, no answer to the question of who to be is once and for all. At any given moment, we're faced anew with any such question we've answered before. No busyness, nor any vacancy can absolve us of the perpetual renewal of the central question for us: who to be. Existence is an incompletable, inescapable project. Someday it ends, but only when we die: there's no such thing as moving on from it or finishing it up and wrapping it with a bow.

Of course, these are the elements of Heidegger's early thought that have

caused many to think it incredibly dreary - as if he's preaching to us is that our existence is a curse. However, he's quick to tell us that in profound boredom, there's nothing of despair. Yes, the stakes of existence can seem monstrous and overwhelming: that's why we shout down or turn away from boredom's silent message. But fundamental to Heidegger's analysis of profound boredom is the notion that, when we're properly attuned to them, we achieve ecstatic liberation. The cultivation of profound boredom—for example, in practices like meditation—is demanding, but in it there are wonders.

【주제어】 하이데거, 지루함, 현상학, 실존주의, 감정

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[국문초록]

이 논문은 하이데거의 감정에 대한 초기 견해와 다자인(Dasein)에 대한 분석을 제공하는 Being and Time 프로젝트에서의 그것의 역할에 대한 소개 개요로 시작한다. 그리고 나서, 나는 그가 1929년-30년 세미나 '형이상학의 기본 개념들'에서 제시된 바와 같이, 그가 주장하는 세 가지 형태의 지루함에 대한 그의 장황한 현상학을 설명하기로 한다. 구체적으로, 나는 먼저 그가 주장하는 '시간을 때우다'의 활동이 처음 두 가지 형태의 구성이라고 주장하는 것은 지루함이 가장 일반적으로 자기 눈에 띄는 적응인 방식을 나타낸다고 주장한다. 둘째로, 나는 특히 지루함의 두 번째 형태는 '명때리다'라는 익숙한 현상으로 가장 잘 이해할 수 있다고 주장한다. 마지막으로, 나는 (하이데거가 심오한 권태라고 부르는) 권태의 제3 형태는, 시간을 때우는 것으로 권태의 깨우쳐 주는 힘을 모호하게 만들지 않는 일종의 명상적 권태로 가장 잘 이해된다고 주장한다. 그리고 나는 우리에게 심오한 권태가 드러내는 것에 대한 하이데거의 주장을 해석하기 위한 교훈적인 지침으로서 명상의 모델을 제시한다.

[Abstract]

Listening to Boredom in Heidegger

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I begin with an introductory overview of Heidegger's early views on emotion and its role in *Being and Time*'s project of giving an analytic of Dasein. Then, I turn to explicating his lengthy phenomenology of the fundamental attunement (*Grundstimmung*) of boredom (*Langeweile*) in what he claims to be its three forms - namely, as presented in his 1929-30 seminar *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. Specifically, I argue first that the activity of 'passing the time' (*Zeitvertreib*) he argues is constitutive of the first two forms represents a way in which boredom is most commonly a self-obscuring attunement. Second, I argue that the second form of boredom in particular can best be understood as the familiar phenomenon of 'zoning out'. Lastly, I argue that the third form of boredom, which Heidegger calls profound boredom (*tiefe Langeweile*), is best understood as a kind of meditative boredom, in which we no longer obscure boredom's revelatory power by passing the time. And, I offer the model of meditative practice as an instructive guide for interpreting Heidegger's claims about what profound boredom reveals to us.

[Keywords] Heidegger, boredom, phenomenology, existentialism, emotion

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