

**The Concept of Boredom: Its Impact on Work-Based Learning (0014)**  
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This profound boredom is the *fundamental attunement*. We pass the *time*, in order to master it, because time becomes long in boredom. Time becomes long for us. Is it supposed to be short, then?

Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 1995, p. 80)

I am reminded that the notion of boredom, as a concept, has a history which has been beset with negative connotations. The modern conception of boredom has an antecedent in the medieval concept of *acedia*, as one of the “seven deadly sins” in the Christian tradition and placed in direct tension with the love of all god creation – *agape*. Kierkegaard goes as far as to say it is the “root of all evil” (2004: p 230). The modern and secular concept of boredom is rooted in the profound social and economic changes and as McDonald observes it is conceived as a psychological malady, a social malaise or an aesthetic challenge, rather than a sin. Boredom is also intimately related to our notion of time and experience of time and purposeful activity or idleness. However, there is within the literature a different take, one where boredom offers the space for reflection between the emptiness of disinterest of boredom and the despair of nihilism. The perspective in this paper concerns the fundamental relationship between boredom and our taking a stance on our own being explored mainly through the phenomenological method of Heidegger based on his notion of awakening rather than scientific assertion (Heidegger explore this in his lecture, *What is Metaphysics?* (1998) where he also discusses, briefly, the nature of boredom).

This paper presents a phenomenological perspective on the temporality of boredom and how it might positively effects our engagement in a world structured to encourage busyness and a craving for interesting things to replace idleness and the emptiness of boredom. These distractions drive out boredom without noticing what it is, or might be, in regard to the ontology of our presencing in our world. The paper considers whether we can define boredom as either an internal mood or a response to external stimuli and, I conclude, as have others, that it is difficult to consider boredom as uni-dimensional response at all which can be identified and dealt with. Somehow it seems that boredom has to do with our ability to experience meaningfulness, either in relation to a particular

situation or to our life as a whole. It is a question of meaning, or more precisely, a lack of meaning.

### **References**

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