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**Josefa Ros Velasco: [Boredom Is in Your Mind. A Shared Psychological-Philosophical Approach.](#)
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What is boredom? What do we feel when we're bored? Is boredom a good thing, a bad thing, or a bit of both? These are some of the questions explored in the book *Boredom Is in Your Mind: A Shared Psychological-Philosophical Approach*, coordinated and edited by Josefa Ros Velasco (Complutense University of Madrid).

In my opinion, and as reflected by the authors, the definition of boredom still needs to be clearly defined in the scientific literature. As mentioned by Peter Toohey in the first chapter, hardly anyone has experienced boredom at some point. However, there are difficulties in providing a clear definition of boredom, and this analysis is relevant for understanding whether boredom can be good or bad. The contribution of this book is highlighted in its attempt to exemplify the confusion and challenges associated with defining this term. One of the proposed definitions is that boredom seems to drive a person away from the situation in which they find themselves and towards a more fruitful activity, thus facilitating a neutral term for boredom. As a psychological state, boredom has been a subject of interest and debate among scholars and researchers. It is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing various cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. However, arriving at a universally accepted definition of boredom has proven to be complex. The subjective nature of boredom and its manifestation in different individuals and contexts contribute to the challenges faced in its precise definition. The examination of boredom in this book provides valuable insights into its potential implications. The authors acknowledge that boredom can catalyze creativity and self-reflection, prompting individuals to seek more engaging and meaningful activities.

On the other hand, prolonged and chronic boredom can lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and even adverse outcomes such as depression or risky behaviors. By delving into the complexities of boredom, the authors aim to shed light on its ambiguous nature and challenge preconceived notions surrounding it. The book emphasizes the importance of understanding boredom nuancedly, recognizing its potential for both constructive and detrimental effects. Through a comprehensive analysis of various perspectives and empirical evidence, the author seeks to provide a clearer understanding of boredom and its implications for individuals' well-being and personal development.

Therefore, throughout the book, the authors explore boredom as a philosophical topic, analyzing the different theories that have emerged throughout history and their impact on our audiovisual culture. Boredom is also examined psychologically, highlighting how it can negatively affect mental health and its relationship with anxiety and depression. It can also promote positive outcomes such as the search for motivation, self-regulatory effects, and the search for alternative engagement.

The book delves into the intricate relationship between boredom and its associations with personal and interpersonal detriments. It aims to provide insights into the multifaceted nature of boredom by exploring its potential effects on individuals and their interactions. Additionally, the authors examine how boredom can hold motivational significance and catalyze a search for meaning. The book acknowledges the commonly held view that boredom is typically perceived as an unpleasant state accompanied by negative affective experiences. Boredom is often associated with feelings of restlessness, dissatisfaction, and a perceived lack of stimulation in one's environment. However, the authors challenge this conventional understanding of boredom

and propose a pragmatic meaning-regulation hypothesis. In their view, boredom signals a discrepancy between an individual's desired level of meaning or engagement and the current situation's perceived meaningfulness. Boredom can be seen as a motivational state that prompts individuals to seek out new experiences, engage in more personally meaningful activities, or search for a sense of purpose. This perspective suggests that boredom has adaptive functions and can lead to personal growth and development. Van Tilburg and Igou also shed light on the motivational significance of boredom. They propose that boredom can act as a catalyst for individuals to engage in meaning-making processes actively. Boredom may prompt individuals to reflect on their values, goals, and aspirations and explore new avenues for personal growth and fulfilment. In this sense, boredom can be seen as a driver for self-discovery and pursuing a more meaningful life. By examining the multifaceted nature of boredom, van Tilburg and Igou contribute to the growing body of literature on the topic. Their pragmatic meaning-regulation hypothesis provides a fresh perspective beyond the traditional negative portrayal of boredom. Instead, they highlight its potential motivational significance and role in individuals' search for meaning and personal development.

The book frames an excellent theoretical framework for understanding how boredom can be functional if it motivates our behavior. They relate it, among others, to Csíkszentmihályi's flow theory (2005). This theory is related to boredom, as boredom can result from a person's lack of adequate challenges. According to the flow theory, people experience a state of flow when fully immersed in an activity that is challenging but achievable to their needs. People feel energized, focused, and committed to the task during this flow. In contrast, when people do not have enough challenges to maintain their attention, they may experience boredom. Feelings of apathy, disinterest, and lack of energy characterize boredom. People may feel bored when they perform tasks that are too easy or monotonous or are not involved in anything in particular. Considering this theory, and as the only disagreement with the authors, I consider that relating video games as a mindless or potentially addictive task can lead the reader to fall into the stigma already created towards video gamers when several studies mention their potential (for example, Granic et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006).

Another aspect that I found intriguing is how the authors highlight that not all individuals react similarly to boredom, nor do they possess the same strategies and capacities to cope with it. Furthermore, even the same person may not react similarly in different circumstances of boredom. This emphasizes the importance of understanding the sociocultural and individual context to comprehend one's values and ideas regarding boredom. The authors emphasize that individuals' responses to boredom are influenced by many factors, including their cultural background, personal experiences, and individual characteristics. Cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping how boredom is perceived and managed. For example, in some cultures, boredom may be viewed as an opportunity for introspection and self-reflection, while in others, it may be associated with laziness or a lack of productivity (Ng et al., 2015).

Boredom Is in Your Mind: A Shared Psychological-Philosophical Approach offers ideas for preventing and managing boredom, such as practicing mindfulness, seeking meaningful activities, and fostering creativity and curiosity. Despite being unable to unify boredom criteria, several facets were observed. Some experts described it as a feeling of restlessness or lack of

interest in tasks or activities, while others saw it as an underlying emotion that manifests in different ways. The relationship between boredom and creativity was also discussed, and how creativity can sometimes arise from the lack of external stimuli.

Furthermore, this book delves into the evolutionary function of boredom. It suggests that boredom could have evolved as a signalling that an individual needs to find new sources of stimulation or activities to stay alert and active. Finally, the book also describes the relationship between boredom and modern technology and how the constant stimulation provided by smartphones and other electronic devices may affect our ability to tolerate boredom. It is mentioned how technology can provide a temporary distraction from boredom. Still, it can also contribute to a greater sense of detachment and lack of human connection, an aspect of high interest that should favour the design of new research studies that provide more information on this phenomenon.

In conclusion, boredom is a common human experience that can be positive and negative. Although often considered uncomfortable, it can also be an opportunity for reflection, creativity, and personal growth. This book is a compilation of relevant research on exploring boredom from a multidimensional perspective. Undoubtedly, it is an exciting contribution that incites us to analysis, reflection, debate, and research on the subject. These aspects make this book an unavoidable reference not only for university professors and researchers but also for anyone interested in a phenomenon that we have all experienced at some point... boredom.

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