

Journal of Boredom Studies (ISSN 2990-2525)

Issue 2, 2024, pp. 1-4

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13872787>

<https://www.boredomsociety.com/jbs>



**Josefa Ros Velasco: [La enfermedad del aburrimiento](#). Alianza Editorial, 2022, pp. 298.
ISBN: 9788413628011**

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How to cite this paper: da Mota Matos, M. (2024). Josefa Ros Velasco: *La enfermedad del aburrimiento* Alianza Editorial, pp. 298, 2022. ISBN 9788413628011. *Journal of Boredom Studies*, 2.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13872787>

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Received 16 September 2024; Accepted 20 September 2024.

If we are something, we are desire. Continuous and insidious desire to be, to have, to represent ourselves to others, and if we yearn for a peace of heart that will put a stop to the volitional rampage, the only answer is knowledge. Knowing what we are is the beginning to tolerate ourselves, to put up with ourselves and to live in a 'sociable unsociability' with others.

Carlos Javier González Serrano, in Ros Velasco, *La enfermedad del aburrimiento*.

In the end of the introduction of the book *La enfermedad del aburrimiento*, in English *The Disease of Boredom*,¹ by Dr. Josefa Ros Velasco, the author offers us an invitation: to engage with our own experiences with boredom to cultivate self-awareness for understanding and embracing it wholeheartedly. The intent is to delve into the essence of boredom surpassing mere categorizations of good and evil or pathology and disease to uncover its hidden depths. This is the path she leads us through in the 289 pages of the book.

La enfermedad del aburrimiento offers a comprehensive exploration of boredom as a complex psychological and social phenomenon. Ros Velasco traces the concept of boredom as a pathology from antiquity to the contemporary age, by studying its diverse depictions, in philosophical, theological, medical, and psychological literature. Over the course of the chapters, the author retraces in detail the historical perception of boredom, presenting it as a pervasive phenomenon that has affected Western society, and exploring the evolution of societal attitudes towards it.

Therefore, boredom is established as a multifaceted experience, ranging from situational, a simple passing moment, to deep, a chronic form, each carrying unique characteristics and consequences. As other authors working with boredom in the last decades, Ros Velasco also questions the idea of boredom being only a negative feeling (among others Elpidorou, 2020; Harris, 2000; Mann and Cadman, 2014), highlighting the potential adaptive functionality of situational boredom. She suggests that despite its unpleasant nature, it can stimulate reflection, imagination, and anticipation, preventing stagnation. In this sense, the book presents an excellent exploration of the dual nature of boredom, contrasting its negative connotations, associated with chronic illness, and its potential positive effects in healthier types. In fact, the author presents a very sensible distinction between the effects of pathological and healthy forms of boredom, while focusing her analysis on pathological views of boredom through history.

Following the time frame posited by the narrative, we are familiarized with the perception of boredom since as a shameful state linked to a lack of dedication to society and virtue in Greek antiquity, to its classification as a capital sin in the Middle Ages (acedia), towards its designation as the mal del siglo, culminating in its emergence as a symptom of modernity's capitalist ethos.

Drawing extensively on the historical perception of the construct, the book portrays the process of transition from boredom as an individual condition associated with a loss of faith or a lack of meaning in life to a wider social and cultural symptom after the French Revolution. In this sense, chapter four is rich in insights of its representation in literature and philosophy, emphasizing the association with the loss of metaphysical values and existential anguish. The called *ennui* persists on French literature from the 19th century, eternalizing the pathological vision of boredom as a chronic disease, both social and individual, leading to melancholy and

¹ The English translation will be published in 2025 by Princeton University Press.

suicide. Quite sensibly, the author points the tension created between sociological and medical-psychological views of boredom, that persists to this day and make it difficult to study the construct.

Moving forward in time, Ros Velasco draws important connections between boredom and worker alienation, especially in the context of industrial capitalism, arguing that job dissatisfaction and a lack of personal fulfillment contributed significantly to feelings of alienation and boredom in working life. Ironically, as boredom arise from both an excess and a lack of free time, it establishes a complex relationship with leisure, productivity, and psychological well-being. This perspective adds a critical socioeconomic dimension to the understanding of boredom, making the book valuable for researchers looking into workers' health who would like to start getting closer to studies in the field of boredom.

The author also advocates the existence of a paradoxical relationship between boredom and mass entertainment culture. The main argument is that while the cultural industry was developed as a solution to "democratized boredom", offering intensified stimulation and proliferating entertainment activities, it inadvertently contributed to a new form of widespread boredom since it also discourages independent thought and intellectual effort. In an excellent move, the author questions us: "It is not easy to say which causes more discomfort, being bored by the fact of doing nothing or being bored doing something that was supposed to free us from boredom" (p. 164), defending the latter as a cause of greater hopelessness.

Based on the work of philosopher Hans Blumenberg, in the last chapter of the book Ros Velasco seeks to understand 'the pathological prehistory of boredom'. The author's exploration of boredom as a potentially adaptive behavior in anthropogenic situations is particularly intriguing. On this base, she posits that boredom may have played a crucial role in human evolution, possibly emerging in prehistory, what challenges the notion that boredom is merely a modern affliction, suggesting deep roots in our evolutionary history.

While acknowledging the speculative nature of many of these ideas, Ros Velasco presents a compelling case for boredom as a fundamental aspect of the human condition. She suggests that our propensity for boredom might be one of the defining characteristics that separate us from other species, potentially driving our continuous quest for novelty, stimulation, and meaning. These ideas align with recent research on bioecological models' development of boredom, that suggests the pivotal role of context on boredom regulation, closely related to our societal systems (Anderson and Perone, 2024).

Ros Velasco highlights that despite the growing body of research on boredom our understanding of the subject remains limited. Throughout the historical and scientific overview presented a crucial point is underscored: regardless the wealth of research, a universal understanding and definition of boredom remains elusive. Although this lack of consensus has led to persistent claims about boredom being an understudied phenomenon, the author contends the opposite: boredom has been extensively studied, particularly in recent decades and within the fields of psychology and psychiatry. This paradox reinforces the author's claims about the complex and multifaceted nature of boredom and the need for a more nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to understanding this construct.

In essence, Ros Velasco invite us to reconsider our relationship with a fundamental aspect of the human condition by challenging us to engage more deeply with our experiences of boredom. This challenge becomes even more provocative for researchers. There is much to uncover about the roots of boredom in human history, its adaptive functions in our development, the role of boredom in social change, and in another sense, effective boredom coping strategies and functional management.

In conclusion, *La enfermedad del aburrimiento* represents a landmark contribution to the field of boredom studies, offering a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the subject. Through meticulous research and thoughtful analysis, Ros Velasco traces the historical and cultural evolution of boredom while challenging conventional wisdom about its nature and implications.

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