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## **Living Through Change: Boredom and the Rhetoric of Modern Experience**

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**Abstract:** After a brief meditation on how a pluralistic and anti-essentialist approach to Boredom Studies can help us navigate challenges that characterize interdisciplinary knowledge formations more generally, this paper takes up the theoretical and practical problem of thinking boredom as a historically situated, embodied experience (or failure of experience): not as a timeless crisis of meaning, but rather as a historically specific configuration of empty, meaningless time. As I show, boredom's seeming ubiquity amidst the ongoing social, cultural, and technological transformation that defines the modern world is at once historically and philosophically significant. As an index of the problems of meaning that accompany the challenges of living through historic change, boredom today at once resembles and differs from past forms and permutations of the experience. Expanding our sights to encompass the intertwining varieties of malaise in the contemporary world—not just boredom, but loneliness, anxiety, depression, despair, and all their siblings—can help counter the personalization of alienation by revealing the axes connecting individualized suffering to the social, political, and ecological challenges of our time.

**Keywords:** Boredom Studies, interdisciplinary inquiry, Simmel, boredom and change, personalization of alienation.

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The emergence and evolution of Boredom Studies as an interdisciplinary field over the past twenty years places us before theoretical, methodological, and practical questions. As in other interdisciplinary knowledge formations embracing the rubric of ‘Studies’ in or of a problem or topic, defining the object of study generates quandaries and controversies, and scholars with divergent disciplinary formations often speak past one another as they contest the aims and focus of the Studies in question. In the case of Boredom Studies, the intimate relation between topic and experience, between boredom research and being bored, also gives rise to a specific set of challenges, as do (philosophical, but also historical and psychological) questions about the relationship between language and experience.

After a brief meditation on how Boredom Studies can fruitfully approach challenges proper to interdisciplinary knowledge formations more broadly, this essay takes up the theoretical and practical problem of thinking boredom as a historically situated, embodied experience. I contend that we can best address the problems of malaise, loss of meaning, and boredom in the contemporary world through a pluralistic and anti-essentialist approach that integrates historical self-reflection on the relation between boredom and change—between the proliferation of boredom and modernity’s ongoing social, cultural, and technological transformations.

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Boredom is, paradoxically, fascinating. Indeed, the growth of Boredom Studies over the past twenty years suggests that the experience may well become more interesting the more we think about it, with every attempt to pin it down disclosing new questions and connections. This openness has not, to be sure, prevented repeated efforts to produce definitive definitions and comprehensive syntheses that aspire to settle, once and for all, what boredom really is. Such undertakings stand in a long tradition that includes Reinhard Kuhn’s conception of ennui as *idée force*, Heidegger’s existential analytics of *Langeweile*, and Kierkegaard’s theology of desire, to name only a few. These efforts often make fascinating reading, yet in the end they only deepen what seems to be a fundamental ambiguity in the experience as such. Far from converging on a common understanding of boredom, different thinkers continue to reach incongruent conclusions—when, that is, they are not actively contradicting one another.

Lots of ink has been spilled trying to reconcile these discrepancies once and for all, with lumpers subsuming differences under generalizing definitions and splitters distinguishing different types or dimensions of boredom itself. At this meta-level, too, interesting work has been generated from a great many different starting points. In short, the growth of Boredom Studies as a whole has brought ever greater diversification of methods and perspectives, with the most compelling work often multiplying, rather than foreclosing, new possibilities for understanding the experience.

With all due respect to efforts both scientific and philosophical to get things pinned down once and for all, I think we do better to embrace that multiplicity and welcome the consequent proliferation of differences as a fundamentally salutary feature of a new sort of knowledge formation. Anniversaries tempt us to generate syntheses and classifications, to systematize and summarize and canonize. Yet a radically pluralistic approach seems much better grounded in our

common focus on an experience and phenomenon that looks very different from different perspectives, in different contexts, and even to oneself at different moments.

Boredom Studies should incorporate this diversity by cultivating the radical potential of genuinely interdisciplinary conversation to keep us unsettled—or at least capable of revising our assumptions and shifting perspectives and approaches as the occasion requires. Such methodological pluralism is well-grounded in the category of boredom itself, with its multiple and ambiguous meanings and referents. Moreover, maintaining an openness to alternative modes of interpretation helps keep us attuned to the need for self-reflexivity with regard to the bigger picture. As participants in an emergent knowledge formation, we need to ask why this topic appears to be so compelling in the contemporary world. If Boredom Studies is flourishing, how does this speak to our moment? How, in particular, should we understand the precipitous rise in research on boredom in diverse disciplinary contexts in the first decades of the twenty-first century?

Such reflexivity keeps intellectual work vital, and it must be historical and cultural as well as methodological. In privileging particular disciplinary perspectives, we run the risk of begging the question of what boredom is, which all too often comes down to whose boredom matters. If boredom is at once a psychological and a cultural phenomenon, at once an existentially and an ethically salient problem, a sociologically and a spiritually shaped experience, there is no a priori justification for privileging any of these perspectives over the others. If, instead, we attend critically to the diversity of modes of understanding and talking about boredom and acknowledge the complexity and multiplicity of the phenomenon itself as a common starting point, we can start to think differently about the incongruities and discrepancies revealed by different disciplinary hermeneutics. Rather than arguing about definitions and minding the boundaries of acceptable arguments, we can begin to appreciate the value of keeping multiple, at least partially incommensurable paradigms of explanation in the conversation.

This is, of course, easier said than done. Taken seriously, interdisciplinary dialogue also generates increased self-reflexivity about the limitations of particular disciplinary frameworks. Since what counts as evidence is always relative to epistemological and other assumptions operative in a knowledge paradigm, bringing divergent accounts of boredom into conversation can reveal lacunae in the foundational principles or points of departure that frame disciplinary perspectives.

Such encounters can be exciting and disclosive, but they can also make for difficult conversations. Genuine interdisciplinary dialogue reveals the limits of expertise by exposing the contingency of epistemic self-assurance: by making visible that confidence in one's usual methods of inquiry and analysis marks a belonging to a particular community of inquiry—and revealing how much the ways we conceive of knowledge and evidence depend on paradigms others do not share. Undertaken with seriousness and mutual respect, encounters with other approaches may well problematize our understanding of truth itself by revealing the contingency of our most basic assumptions and the relativity of our conceptions of knowledge, evidence,

method, and so on to a particular ‘thought collective.’<sup>1</sup> And this can be, or at least feel, dangerous, all the more so in circumstances where institutional precarity is more rule than exception. Still, as recent developments have underlined, disregarding the politics of knowledge brings its own hazards, and it is high time for historical self-reflection on the organization of our thoughtways (see Goodstein, 2017).

With these broader considerations in mind, I would like to reflect on what seems to me to be driving the ascendance of Boredom Studies from outside the academy: the sheer proliferation of boredom, that is to say the lived experience of empty, meaningless time, in contemporary life. The seeming ubiquity of boredom in a time of rapid change—indeed, amidst political and cultural tumult—is at once historically and philosophically significant. As I have argued elsewhere, it is also politically salient: even as boredom is provoked, deployed, managed, and instrumentalized in manifold ways in contemporary life, our capacity to reflect upon the phenomenon is distorted and obscured by interpretive frameworks that psychologize malaise and personalize alienation (Goodstein, 2025).

Here, though, I shall focus not on the politics of boredom but on the phenomenon itself, exploring this pervasive experience of the absence of experience—of empty, meaningless time—as at once consequence and expression of a distinctive configuration of self and world. On my reading, boredom’s ubiquity reflects socio-cultural and material conditions that shape the rhetoric of experience as such in the twenty-first century. I’ll situate this discussion vis-à-vis my approach to theorizing the relations between boredom and modernity in *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity* (Goodstein, 2005).

*Experience without Qualities* is often glossed as claiming that boredom is a modern phenomenon, but this is a confounding simplification. It is, of course, a matter of historical fact that ‘boredom’ entered the English language around the turn of the nineteenth century. However, my book’s claims about boredom and modernity center not on that linguistic novelty per se but rather on a much broader phenomenon indexed by the rapid dissemination of the term: by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a flourishing, transnational discourse in which the term boredom and its synonyms and correlatives in other European language were deployed by rich and poor, intellectuals and workers, men and women, to thematize and reflect upon distinctive experiences of temporality connected with (the rate of) change and problems of meaning in modern life.

Rather than asserting that boredom itself, whatever that might mean, is a modern phenomenon, I argue that what needs explaining is the historical circumstance (to borrow Walter Benjamin’s subtle formulation) that in Europe in the 1840s “ennui began to be felt in epidemic proportions” [“Die Langeweile begann in den vierziger Jahren epidemisch empfunden zu werden”] (Benjamin, 1982, p. 165, a. trans.). Whether they understood their experience as a

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<sup>1</sup> The term is Ludwik Fleck’s (1980 [published 1935]). The question of the historicity of (conceptions of) boredom is at the heart of many of these theoretical difficulties, not least as the assumption that boredom is an ahistorical and (potentially) universal experience is so deeply engrained in empirical studies. See Goodstein (2020) on the methodological implications of that erasure of historical perspective. Boddice (2024) highlights related problems in Emotion Studies due to neurophysiologists and lab psychologists ignoring the work of their colleagues in history.

perennial feature of the human condition or as something novel, all sorts of people began to participate in a discourse describing experiences of malaise and stultification, of loss of meaning and hope in the face of the profound social, cultural, and political transformations underway during this period. *Experience without Qualities* asks how we can and should understand that democratization—a development marked by, yet not reducible to, the emergence and proliferation of the novel English category. Since the neologism ‘boredom’ comprehends the paradigmatically ‘French’ and ‘German’ linguistic legacies—*ennui*’s resonance with existential questions and the suffering tied to pangs of desire on one hand, and the explicitly temporal experience of *Langeweile* on the other—I use this term to refer to the transnational discourse thematizing increasingly widespread disaffection and malaise in the face of the ways life and the world were changing amidst what Eric Hobsbawm (1996) dubbed the dual revolution (cf. Musharbash [2007] that explores connections between boredom and modernity and modernization in a non-western context).

Even as *Experience without Qualities* argues for a focus on the novelty of that discourse and explores how and why that distinctive metaphors took hold so rapidly, it also underlines how compelling accounts of boredom (by whatever name) as a trans-historical feature of the human condition can be. However, such interpretations of boredom as a (potentially) universal feature of the human condition may themselves begin from multiple ontological and theological premises and thus understand the relations between experience and history quite differently, as I illustrate through readings of Reinhard Kuhn’s *The Demon of Noontide: Ennui in Western Literature* (1976) and Martin Heidegger’s *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1983).

*Experience without Qualities* argues that neither (paradigmatically ‘philosophical’) accounts of boredom, by whatever name, as a transhistorical, universal feature of the human condition nor (paradigmatically ‘sociological’) interpretations of boredom as psychological symptom of specific socio-cultural, historical circumstances can give a sufficient account of the transformation manifest in the precipitous rise of talk and writing about boredom in the long nineteenth century. As I demonstrate, both sorts of interpretations can be illuminating, yet these competing understandings of what boredom really *is* stand in an aporetic relation. In short, since illuminating accounts can be generated from diametrically opposed points of departure and since the phenomenon itself looks quite different from different disciplinary perspectives, it is not at all clear how we might establish any absolute methodological or definitional priority in determining what boredom really is. The methodological challenge is how to think boredom as both a historical and a philosophical phenomenon.

At the heart of my argument, then, is not ‘*ti esti*’—the question of what boredom is—but rather the question of how to interpret the evolution in the dominant rhetoric of reflection on subjective malaise in the period. Why and how do experiences that are understood simultaneously as epiphenomenal effects and existential crises become so pervasive as to seem effectively universal by the end of the nineteenth century? I interpret the emergence of the discourse on boredom (that is, the discourse paradigmatically represented by the emergence and rapid spread of an English term unknown before this period) as a symptom of what I call the

democratization of skepticism in modernity. As I show, the boredom that “began to be felt in epidemic proportions” (Benjamin, 1982, p. 165, a. trans.) in the mid-nineteenth century was an index of profound dislocation amidst sweeping cultural, political, and socio-economic change. As inherited modes of understanding increasingly lost purchase, it registered a felt need for a new language of reflection on the crisis of experience that accompanied the seemingly all-encompassing process of transformation bringing a recognizably modern world into being.

Thus, even as I recognize the appeal of accounts of boredom, by whatever name, as a trans-historical, universal feature of the human condition, I contend that such accounts occlude what we most need to think: the way ‘boredom’ indexes not sameness but change. Proliferating in and through a new, disenchanting rhetoric of reflection on subjective experience, the discourse on boredom embodied and facilitated a wider reframing of problems of meaning in materialist terms. As I put it in the book’s introduction,

[t]he boredom that spreads throughout European society in the course of the nineteenth century is thus less a new feeling than a new way of feeling—or more precisely a form of reflective distance that becomes a new attitude toward experience altogether (Goodstein, 2005, p. 3).

Boredom is not, on this view, singular; as a reflective category, it discloses a multiplicity of possibilities, becoming a lived metaphor for problems of meaning in the post-foundational modern landscape Robert Musil described as a world of ‘being without qualities.’

Past is prologue. The same dynamic that drove the proliferation of talk about boredom amidst the epochal transformations of the nineteenth century is making itself felt in the twenty-first. As a globalized economy and the fruits of technological progress upend inherited ways of life, remake the media landscape, and foster precarity, social dislocation, and political upheaval, complaints of boredom (and its siblings loneliness, cynicism, and anxiety, melancholy and depression) are burgeoning.<sup>2</sup> All these woes reflect problems of meaning and questions of value that open onto wider social and political horizons. Yet the ways such phenomena register the psycho-social and emotional-spiritual impact of wholesale cultural change tend to be occluded by explanatory models that systematically displace the focus onto individual subjects and bodies<sup>3</sup>—paradigms that medicalize malaise and personalize alienation.

In this connection, it is worth recalling Georg Simmel’s insight that pervasive problems of meaning are not incidental, subjective epiphenomena. As Simmel’s monumental *Philosophy of Money* (published 1900) demonstrates, capitalist modernization comprises psycho-spiritual as well as social and economic transformation; inner life and social life are reshaped by the reconfiguration of value and purpose in a culture organized by money “as the means of means, as the most universal technology of external life” (1989, p. 676, a. trans.). Money is not a mere

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<sup>2</sup> The intersection of loneliness and social media and the negative (mental and physical) health impacts of both have become sites of particular concern. See for example the U.S. Surgeon General’s 2023 Advisories on *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* (a) and *Social Media and Youth Mental Health* (b).

<sup>3</sup> A case in point: amidst the wreckage of contemporary civil society, as millions juggle multiple menial jobs just to survive, we are regularly admonished that ‘social connection’ is important for ‘mental health.’

instrument of valuation but rather, as at once signifier and technology, “bearer and symbol,” of abstraction, “the absolute means that thereby ascends to the psychological significance of an absolute end” (Simmel, 1989, p. 307, a. trans.). In the culture borne of industrialization and urbanization, money increasingly becomes the signifier of value as such. What cannot be expressed in quantitative terms fades in cultural as well as social significance, and people struggle to find meaning and purpose beyond the accumulation of wealth.

Simmel’s classic account of *Blasiertheit* (in contemporary psychological jargon, boredom-proneness) as an adaptation to the modern lifeworld<sup>4</sup> grows out of this analysis of money as dominant cultural force qua “universal technology” (1989, p. 676, a. trans.) of modern life. In the face of constant nervous overstimulation, against the background of an overwhelming ‘preponderance’ (*Übergewicht*) of objects, institutions, and impersonal processes over and against mortal individuality, people cope by numbing and hardening themselves: by becoming unwilling or unable to respond with feeling to the world around them. On Simmel’s reading, such blaséness is Janus-faced: at once “the faithful subjective reflex of the fully established money economy” (1995, p. 121, a. trans.) and a form of lived distance that enables the cultivation of subjectivity under conditions of constant flux and in the absence of a horizon of transcendent meaning. This is a crucial point. As Simmel discerned, an attitude of “reserve with an overtone of hidden aversion [...] guarantees the individual a sort and measure of personal freedom for which there is not even an analogy under other conditions (1995, pp. 123–124, a. trans.). The birth of cool out of the spirit of the modern metropolis.

Living with seemingly constant change can be thrilling, yet it also entails fundamental dislocation. As Simmel emphasized, the same circumstances that heighten experiences of individuality and personal uniqueness also generate psychic and social symptoms of isolation, alienation, malaise, and loss of meaning and purpose. In our modernity, just as in Baudelaire and Flaubert’s, the discourse on boredom conjoins exhaustion with change and addiction to incessant novelty. Time cannot pass quickly enough; it is constantly accelerating, yet passing too slowly; fervid desires alternate with indifference; keeping up with the world seems by turns impossible and pointless. The birth of apathy out of the spirit of historical progress.

My contention, again, is that what generates boredom’s distinctive mélange of agitation and malaise is not simply an experience of accelerated, historic change but a historic change in the quality of experience itself in self-consciously modern existence, in a world where skepticism has been democratized. In *Futures Past*, Reinhart Koselleck connects these axes in a fashion that underlines the dilemma of the modern subject. When history is reconceived as progress, he

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<sup>4</sup> It is, of course, quite possible to disagree regarding the meaning and nature of ‘blaséness’ and the relation of both to the designation ‘boredom proneness.’ However, the objections raised above concerning using definitions to establish one’s preferred perspective on an inherently ambiguous experiential category also apply here. My point is that we ought to pay careful attention to the way Simmel situates the experience that he calls blaséness as a complex, multi-dimensional, psycho-spiritual, and physiological adaptation of the metropolitan subject to the conditions of life in the socio-historical world of the modern money economy. What matters, that is, is not Simmel’s terminology but his phenomenological perspective and nuanced socio-cultural and philosophical analysis—an approach that discloses dimensions of boredom that are foreclosed by more circumscribed accounts of blaséness as a psychological state.

writes, past experience ceases to provide a guide for action, and “even the present withdraws into inexperienceability [*Unerfahrbarkeit*]” (Koselleck, 1979, p. 34, a. trans.).

*Experience without Qualities* explored the ways that evacuation of lived experience in the face of constant acceleration into the unknown was both registered and thematized in the nineteenth-century discourse on boredom. There boredom appears now as a symptom, now as a moment of critical distance from a novel valorization of change and progress and the accompanying socio-political, technological, economic, and cultural transformation of everyday life in a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing world. Today, too, the disorienting dynamic Koselleck described takes concrete form in boredom as a lived experience of empty, meaningless time, in which (to invoke Bergson’s distinction [1913]) the ‘mechanistic’ causality that drives modern science and industry eclipses the embodied temporality of lived time or ‘*durée*.’ In boredom, the evacuation of experience borne of existential disorientation in the face of history as progress becomes palpable: the more we measure time, the less we seem to live in the present.

Simmel identified ‘blaséness’ as the subjective pendant of the ubiquitous pocket watches by which individual subjects were integrated into the “stable, supersubjective temporal schema [*übersubjectives Zeitschema*]” that anchored and coordinated modern urban existence, into “the technology [*Technik*] of metropolitan life” as a whole (1995, pp. 120–121, a. trans.).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, today’s smartphones at once symbolize and facilitate the adaptive integration of contemporary subjects into the complex, highly mediated and globalized, transpersonal economic, social, and geographical networks that have continued to be elaborated upon the substrate of temporal-structural coordination in the intervening century. Functioning as a modern subject requires “being connected,” yet the very forms of technological modulation that facilitate our institutional and social incorporation into the global economy generate an experienced loss of embodied reality—a sense of one’s own lived present “withdraw[ing] into inexperienceability” (Koselleck, 1979, p. 34, a. trans.).<sup>6</sup> In modernity, boredom is not a bug but a feature.

The empty eternity of everyday modern boredom today expresses the hollowness that echoes through lives in which a sense of transcendent purpose has become elusive at best. To be sure, such experiences of empty, meaningless time may spur creativity and renewed commitment to life and action; profound boredom may also lead to fundamental theological, anthropological, and philosophical insights. As I have already emphasized, accounts of boredom (by whatever name) as a universal, philosophically salient feature of the human condition have their virtues. But boredom’s prevalence and interest these days mostly leads in a diametrically opposed direction: away from self-reflection into a lived experience of impotence, insignificance, and helplessness in the face of the overweening technologies of modern life and toward hopelessness and despair amidst increasingly implausible narratives of perpetual economic ‘growth’ and techno-scientific and social progress. As precarity increases among the erstwhile middle classes,

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<sup>5</sup> As E. P. Thompson (1967) demonstrated long ago, the imposition of capitalist time discipline over the course of the industrial revolution was tied up with political and ideological struggles over the meaning and purpose of work in human life and culture. These questions have by no means been definitively settled but continue to recur and echo in discourses of ‘work/life balance’ in the twenty-first century.

<sup>6</sup> As is well known, the sheer presence of cell phones is quite distracting, particularly for those highly dependent on these devices in everyday life (Ward et al., 2017).

whose work lives are being shaped to an ever-greater extent by the requirements of machines and information processing, the longing for purpose and ‘creativity’ and the cultivation of ‘mindfulness’ and ‘wellness’ are being instrumentalized in the service of preventing ‘burnout,’ enabling people to maintain their fitness and availability for work that many experience as meaningless (Goodstein, 2025).

What we face in boredom today is not a timeless crisis of meaning as such but a historically specific configuration of empty, meaningless time: a temporal mode brought about when the future eclipses the present and, to invoke Kosselleck’s metaphor, the horizon of experience shrinks into oblivion. Burnout is the psychic equivalent of repetitive stress injury through exposure to modern bureaucratic life, in which goals and targets proliferate in the absence not just of meaningful ends and goals but even of comprehensible reasons and purposes for required actions and activities.

The boredom so pervasive in contemporary life cannot be understood by isolating individual experience from a socio-economic and cultural reality and historical context in which progress has become ideology. And as Simmel observed in his reflections on Berlin’s boredom-prone metropolitan subjects at the turn of the twentieth century, the ever-increasing ‘hypertrophy’ of an objective ‘culture of things’ over and against individual human beings, with their limited capacities for integrating and responding to burgeoning cultural, technological, and material complexity, has both psychological and social consequences. Since then, the webs of ‘technologies of life’ that enable modern life have grown far more extensive and elaborate, and these consequences have likewise intensified.

In the intervening century, the experienced disproportion between the impersonal, accumulated achievements of science, industry, and institutionalized social achievements over and against individual existence and potentiality has continued to grow. In our highly networked existence, hyperbolized forms of mediation are displacing—and, ever more frequently, replacing—embodied connection. To be sure, these technological innovations can be profoundly enabling and even liberating. But their predominance too often undermines the orientation toward lived experience as such that anchors human life in social and natural worlds. In the twenty-first century, the evacuation of experience that accompanies all these changes—so palpable in our uncanny dependency on technologies that we ourselves grow by objectifying, quantifying, and depersonalizing ourselves for the profit of transnational corporations (Zuboff, 2019) is making itself felt in disconcerting ways on a mass scale and (as in its classical modern antecedents) taking forms that both discursively and materially link phenomena of malaise, disassociation, and loss of meaning to living through historic socio-economic, cultural, and technological transformation.

With the narrative of progress losing plausibility even as the trajectory of global warming grows more catastrophic, its effects less predictable with every passing year, complaints of climate-related anxiety, grief, despair, and desperation have grown rampant, notably among younger people. As the social, political, and technological effects of isolation, loss, and the atrophy of human connection during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to resonate in social fragmentation, violence, and an ‘epidemic of loneliness,’ dislocation in the face of accelerating

global transformation finds expression in ‘solastalgia’ as a new form of homelessness, of a creeping bereftness in the world being brought about by climate change.<sup>7</sup>

In another register, this fundamental disorientation of lived experience becomes palpable in the extreme ambivalence with which human beings are greeting the world-destroying and world-transforming potency of the technologies so brilliantly and misleadingly branded ‘artificial intelligence.’ The distinctive mélange of apocalyptic and utopian visions, existential dread, depressive withdrawal, and irrational exuberance being evoked by the nihilistic prospect that AI will, as its prophets aver, very soon completely change everything resonates powerfully with Baudelairean visions of ennui and self-destruction. Meanwhile, the technological delivery devices for all of this are busy chewing up our time and focus and thereby diverting and generating boredom and anxiety in approximately equal parts.

Situating the contemporary discourse on boredom and related forms of subjective malaise in this wider cultural context illuminates the need to move beyond discipline-specific paradigms and framings to a pluralistic conversation that connects sociological, cultural, psychological, philosophical, and political perspectives on contemporary problems of meaning in a genuinely interdisciplinary fashion. Setting aside the question of what boredom is to ask how it appears and how lived problems of meaning are evolving in our own modernity can help Boredom Studies become a site for practical and theoretical interventions that affirm the significance and complexity of lived experience under conditions when both thought and experience seem increasingly endangered. In the face of ever more totalizing forms of cynicism and the wholesale instrumentalization of culture, expanding our sights to encompass the intertwining varieties of malaise in the contemporary world—not just boredom, but loneliness, anxiety, depression, despair, and all their siblings—can help counter the personalization of alienation by revealing the axes connecting individualized suffering to the social, political, and ecological challenges of our time.

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<sup>7</sup> The term was coined by Glenn Albrecht to describe “the lived experience of the desolation of a much-loved landscape” (as he puts it in his foreword to *Solastalgia: An Anthology of Emotion in a Disappearing World* [Bogard, 2023, p. xv; see also psychologist Susan Clayton’s “A New Word for New Feelings” in the same volume, 2023]).

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