

Abstract

Contemporary society perceives boredom largely as a normal part of everyday life. Nevertheless, academic discourse has not come to an agreement on its interpretation. The researchers differ on two main points: first, whether boredom is universal or historically developed phenomenon, and second, whether it is an individual or the external conditions, who is more responsible for the emergence of boredom. This paper reflects on these conceptual difficulties and attempts to elude them by suggesting an alternative, sociologically relevant approach. A new sociological concept of the phenomenon is introduced, based on Martin Heidegger's conceptualization of boredom. Boredom is thereby understood as a specific way, in which individual relates to his/her social environment and its objects. In order to avoid epistemological dilemmas resulting from an imbalanced account, which puts too much emphasis either on subject or its environment, the concept situates boredom's origin and actuation onto the level where subject and its environment meet. The theoretical part of the text is followed by an empirical one, which uses the concept to interpret a specific segment of tourism: organized holidays. This particular model, constructed and offered by travel agencies as a complex product, is understood here as an institutionalized and legitimate form of boredom. Via the concept the paper points to the fact - and its consequences - that what is truly offered here is a possibility for an individual to abandon his/her social environment and its respective obligations.