

Feeling and Time: The Experience of Passage and its Relation to Meaning

Abstract:

This essay notes the relationship between meaning and the felt passage of time. The concrete experience of fluctuations in the rapidity of passage seems to be universal to the human condition. We often associate the rapid passage of time with pleasure. This article shows that this commonly held view of passage is mistaken and that the more fundamental relationship between transformations of passage is found in fluctuations of meaning. Through explorations of boredom, ambition, and concern, this essay illustrates this connection between passage and meaning through an analysis of these feelings on what the author calls “the axis of fluidity,” a theoretical construction utilized to measure the experience of passage. The result of this essay is an assertion that fluctuations in the saturation of experience with meaning influences the feeling of passage. At the end of the work, an unresolved problem appears, and a potentially ameliorating hypothesis is offered.

Keywords:

time, temporality, duration, feeling, passage, meaning, experience

Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
Now bent in heaven, shall behold the night
of our solemnities.

William Shakespeare – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Sensation versus Feeling – A Distinction

One of the unique and interesting constituents of experienced time is its irregular flow. We can imagine this flow to be something like the sensations we have of a river. The waters grow darker and brighter as the sun hides behind the clouds and then peaks out again. The waters grow warmer and cooler in different parts according to where they linger and where they flow more freely. The abundance of smells waft, coalesce, and transform into a seemingly infinite variety of subtle differences. The relations that condition these changes are specific to the domain of sensation. For example, in the case of the qualities of brightness and darkness of the waters, a few of these conditions are the sun, its position in the sky, and the opacity of the clouds that can hinder the light from reaching the water. These epochs of brighter and darker waters are conditioned by the capacity of the sun's light to reach them. In the case of the smells, the presence of the surrounding flora and fauna as well as the direction and speed of the wind contribute to our sensations. All these conditions, to a degree, determine the smells we encounter in any given moment.

We appreciate the experienced passage, in one mode, according to the dynamicity of sensation. Setting aside problems of mediation and representation, when we emphasize this dimension of experienced passage, we are interested in the actual. That is, sensation provides for us something that is actual about the world. When we attend to changes in sensation, we are interested in the variation of actuality as it occurs. This process of emphasizing the actual helps us to adapt to our environment in order to accomplish our goals. That is, sensation assists us in the selection of action.

In contrast to sensation is feeling (or, as I will sometimes refer to it, sentiment).¹ Feeling passage is different from seeing, touching, or smelling it. When we *feel* passage, we are already beyond the actual as it is provided by sensation. Given that feeling has, as part of its affect, a bodily component, it is easy to confuse what I mean by feeling with sensation. The distinction, though, can be made clearer for us by considering the following. In some cases, feeling includes and emphasizes portions of our past. For example, in experiences of grief, nostalgia, or shame, there is an emphasis on past action. Under other conditions, feeling includes and emphasizes the future. For example, the feeling of grace, fear, and ambition are feelings that I call "futural." This relationship of feeling to time, then, means that feeling denotes that part of experience that emphasizes possibility.²

Sensations emphasize the actual, and feelings emphasize the possible. It is difficult to determine whether these two parts of experience are separate but interacting processes or whether they belong to a continuum. We do know that, for example, when we are excited, sensational intensity increases and, conversely, when we are, say, depressed, the world seems more monotone. So, we can empirically establish that sensation and feeling interact in the direction of feeling to sensation. In addition, we know that sensations can influence how we feel.³ For instance, witnessing a tragic event can have a deep and lasting impact on feeling. Based upon the capacity of sensation to influence feeling and vice versa, it is safe to say that, even if the processes of sensation and feeling

1) Feeling and sensation are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this text, I would like to distinguish between feeling and sensation. In this case, what I mean by feeling is everything we bring to and everything that is left over from sensation. Generally speaking, when I refer to feeling so broadly construed the term would include constituents of experience like memories, meanings, intellections, and so on. For the moment, however, I want to consider the bodily feeling of passage.

2) So as not to distract from the primary investigation, I will address the problem of possibility in the past here. For me, and thinkers like Randall Auxier, Gary Herstein, and A.N. Whitehead, possibility is atemporal. This means that it is included in all parts of the passage of time, past, (the specious) present, and future. In the future, possibility is experienced as *what could be but is not*. In the past, possibility is experienced as *what might have been and was not*.

3) Technically, sensations can only influence feeling through acts of perception, which require judgments. However, given that those judgments rely upon sensation, we can safely say that sensation has the capacity to indirectly affect feeling.

are independent in some fashion, they are interwoven in experience. Such a conclusion does not seem to take a stretch of the imagination to validate. We do, after all, find them together in the unities of experience. We may emphasize one through attention, but the other is always there in the background.

Fluidity – Feeling and Passage

In my dissertation, *Event, Duration, Soul: A Study of the Measure of Intensive Magnitudes*, I developed a Bergsonian measure of feeling (what Bergson sometimes refers to as the “deep passions,” where there is little or no extensity to be found) that he presents in *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. I accomplished this through laying out a coordinate system that utilizes three axes of intensity as hinted at by Bergson. One of those axes, the axis of fluidity, is the concern of this essay.⁴

Bergson provides us with very little text in the way of providing a rich appreciation for intensity in his work. In the case of the fluidity axis, I had at my disposal only a few sentences.⁵ When I speak of high fluidity experience, I refer to quick passage. This pole of the axis refers to events (on the higher end of the pole) that are very often over before the opportunity to reflect on passage occurs. Examples of high fluidity can include an evening with friends, reading an intriguing book, or enthusiastic playing. Bergson speaks of high fluidity experience when he writes on joy:

Neither inner joy, nor passion is an isolated inner state which at first occupies a corner of the soul and gradually spreads. At its lowest level it is very like a turning of our states of consciousness toward the future. Then, as if their weight were diminished by this attraction, our ideas and sensations succeed one another with greater rapidity; our movements no longer cost us the same effort. Finally, in cases of extreme joy, our perceptions and memories become tinged with an indefinable quality, as with a kind of heat or light, so novel that now and then, as we stare at our own self, we wonder how it can really exist.⁶

The experiential basis for the concept of high fluidity is the felt rapidity of ideas and sensations that we encounter as a significant feature of some events.

In contrast to high fluidity events (which I sometimes call “low resistance”), we find low fluidity events on the opposite pole of the axis. These are characterizable as events that seem to endure much longer than they should or, at least, longer than we want them to. Bergson provides us with an example of one kind of low fluidity experience. He writes,

Sorrow begins by being nothing more than a facing towards the past, an impoverishment of our sensation and ideas, as if each of them were now contained entirely in the little which it gives out, as if the future were in some way stopped up. And it ends with the impression of crushing failure,

4) The other two axes are the locus axis and the temporal inclination axis. The first denotes the relation of innerness and outerness and the latter refers to our relations toward the past and the future as mentioned above.

5) According to Pete Gunter, a Bergson scholar, *Time and Free will*, Bergson’s master’s thesis, was too long. His committee requested several times that Bergson cut significant portions of the text to achieve a “manageable” sized thesis. After several major edits, he was able to get it approved. Unfortunately, we have no version of the text in its earlier stages of development. Bergson may have developed something along the lines of a theory of the measure of intensity in the original version.

6) Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (London: George Allen and Co., 1912), 10.

the effect of which is that we aspire to nothingness, while every new misfortune, by making us understand better the uselessness of the struggle, causes us bitter pleasure.⁷

We have all experienced the feeling that the future is “stopped up.” It is something like what I imagine a temporal cold would feel like, but instead of a stuffy nose, we have this feeling of our passage into the future as cumbersome, awkward, or, to use a metaphor, grinding.

In both high and low fluidity experiences, there is an initial comment to be made that is correct but does not seem to capture the whole value of the fluidity axis as it is related to our capacity to understand feeling and time. This initial reflection on fluidity is an assessment of the centrality of a particular disposition toward the future as the determining factor that constitutes the relation between feeling and fluidity. This disposition could be characterized as the “degree of comfort” one feels in relation to the future. The more or less comfortable one is with the future, the more or less fluid that experience will be.⁸ For example, when we fear something, we find that we are resistant to the constellation of possibilities that would bring about the realization of what we fear.⁹ We avoid these possibilities, and, in doing so, we resist a part of the future. On the other hand, in some cases, we find ourselves in pleasant conditions and the majority of anticipatable possibilities provide a promise of further pleasure, we welcome the future and glide into it with a spirit of ease.

The use of the phrase “degree of comfort” here provides us with a simple term for understanding fluidity. However, when we inspect the term in the actual analysis of sentiments, we find that comfort or its negation does not always adequately describe our relation to the future. This inadequacy occurs because we can and do find ourselves in relations with the future that go beyond mere comfort or discomfort. Sometimes we can be enthusiastic about futural possibility and other times we find that we are ready to “leap” into the future. On the other hand, sometimes we can barely stand the possibilities that loom in our future to the degree that, if given the opportunity to avoid having a future at all, we would at least consider the possibility (though having no future is, technically speaking, *not* a possibility). What is meant by “degrees of comfort” regarding possibility, then, is a simple stand in phrase that refers to the much richer range of attractions and aversions to futural possibility.

The initial reflection on the fluidity of experience yields the result that we can understand something about this constituent of experience through the disposition we adopt toward the future. In an effort to achieve a deeper appreciation for the structure of fluidity, however, we need to press on and back into experience itself.

7) Ibid., 11.

8) Comfort or discomfort regarding the future can manifest as various patterns that might not seem, at least initially, to be appropriately categorized according to these terms. For example, the soldier in combat sometimes faces intense possibilities of her own bodily annihilation. To say that she is comfortable or uncomfortable with these possibilities does not seem to pay proper respect to her experience. And yet, well-trained, well-equipped, and adept soldiers will find something within themselves that transforms what would normally be a horrifying (and, thus, low fluidity) experience into one that they feel the possibilities of their own annihilation and are more comfortable with those possibilities. That is not to say that they are comfortable with the *actualization* of those possibilities. In most cases, the actualization of annihilation shapes soldiers’ actions in such a way that they do everything they can to avoid such actualities. What the accomplished soldier can do is organize her orientation on the future in such a way that she acts with ease while simultaneously feeling the persistent possibilities of annihilation. That is, she becomes comfortable with the possibility of her own death to the degree that she can become an effective actor in order to avoid the actualization of her death. Another important point that we can take from this example is that not all highly fluid experience is pleasurable. The soldier in combat can have highly fluid experience in what would otherwise be aesthetically wretched conditions. This fluidity is the result of her acceptance of the possibility of death, which she acknowledges but does not welcome.

9) “Constellation” is a technical term developed by Auxier and Herstein that designates how possibilities hang together in the horizon of possibility prior to the any selection of them. Constellations contain contradictory or oppositional possibilities that cannot be simultaneously actualized. For further information regarding the order of possibility, see: Randall E. Auxier and Gary L. Herstein, *The Quantum of Explanation: Whitehead’s Radical Empiricism*. (New York: Routledge, 2017), chapter 8.

To accomplish this task, we will endeavor to imaginatively live and analyze three different sentiments to provide examples of the two different kinds of movements possible in fluidity. First, we will discuss boredom and ambition to illustrate boredom as a sentiment that is exemplary of the struggle with low fluidity and where high fluidity is the result of the escape from boredom. Second, we will analyze concern as a sentiment that exemplifies the transition from higher to lower fluidity.¹⁰ We do not aim to provide comprehensive analyses of any of these sentiments. We could write whole books on each of them, after all. The purpose for our analyses, in this context, is to illustrate the relation of meaning to fluidity. So, our analyses only require enough depth to uncover that relation.

Boredom and Ambition – Feelings of (dis)Interest¹¹

The departure point we take on the way to discovering the nature of boredom is found in its colloquial definition: boredom is the experience of having “nothing to do.” If this definition is taken as an ontological description of the experience of boredom, we would find ourselves stuck in a present without the possibility of future action. That is, we would find ourselves in a world without a future. In the highest phases of boredom, we may, in fact, *feel* like there is literally nothing to do, but the experience of boredom illustrates that this feeling is a hyperbolic agitation of our actual relation to the actual world. For example, even when we are experiencing a high phase of boredom, we *could*, among other possibilities, dance, do yoga, or read a book. All the actions that were available within the horizon of possibility before we were bored are still there as we transition through the various phases of boredom.¹² What constitutes boredom as such is that it consists in the feeling that there is no possible action that we anticipate as *satisfying*. This form of boredom we call “ennui:” it is our focus here. It can be contrasted with a narrower type of boredom that we call “tedium,” which results from having to perform the same action over and over. Tedium takes on its character because there is so much *else* to do rather than what one *is doing* that any variation in action would add interest; meanwhile, in ennui, there is *nothing* one can *do* to relieve it – *all* actions disappear into an indefinite horizon of null satisfaction.

Boredom is, according to our provisional appreciation of fluidity (where fluidity is determined by our disposition toward the future), a prime example of a high resistance mode of becoming. In boredom, we are not indifferent to our future. Rather, the future is felt to be a monolithic mass of undifferentiable possibility. To suffer boredom is to experience helplessness in the face of this homogeneous beast because we have no viable method for differentiating between constellations of possibility beyond the barest kind of determinative judgment. Because of this helplessness in the face of the undifferentiable possibility, boredom can include dispositional ingredients like confusion, agitation, and frustration directed toward a future that does not yield to differentiation.

10) Heidegger writes on both boredom and concern (where concern is the inauthentic version of care). While there might be similarities in some of what I have to say about these two sentiments to Heidegger’s reflections, our goals are not the same. I am not trying to provide a fundamental ontology or locate an avenue where the question of being can be found. I want to lay out the relationship of the experience of fluidity to meaning.

11) Much of the following text is taken from my dissertation, which will be published digitally by the graduate school at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

12) To be more exacting, in the experience of boredom, the horizon of possible action includes more than it does when we are not bored. The reason for this expansion of possibility in boredom is that action driven by many sentiments other than boredom provide nuance to the orders of the possible in terms of value. This nuance, in turn, provides a contrast between which possibilities we would like to actualize and those we would not. Further, of those that we would like to actualize, there are gradients upon gradients of value that exhibit a hierarchy (ambiguous though it may be) valued possibility. Boredom, however, does not suffer such constraints. In other words, within boredom, dancing, yoga, reading a book, and most of the other kinds of actions we could take all amount to the same thing. None of them have any value, so all of them are available to us.

Suffering boredom is, in a sense, worse than being a zombie, for at least a zombie finds satisfaction in consumption. In boredom, we discover a future that cannot be consumed because the consumption of possibility requires a tenable method for choosing some possibilities over others. Zombies do not eat dirt. Boredom leaves us without a discriminating “palate” for appreciating possibility. In such conditions, the future is unconsumable, and history becomes one damned thing after another.¹³

If we contrast the feeling of boredom with sentiments where boredom is absent, we find, among other sentiments, *ambition*.¹⁴ Experience illustrates that ambition derives from a problem, literally, though generally speaking. Ambition always contains the ingredient of an aim and a consequent purpose. The problem of ambition is always to discover and actualize a course of actions that satisfactorily brings about an event or series of events that achieves the aim that constitutes part of the feeling of ambition. What is satisfactory, in both action and result, is first conditioned by the impossible. In a process of elucidation (though this process of elucidation predominantly occurs precognitively), the selected constellation is understood as belonging to some constituent of the order of possibility. The unfolding of ambition, in its ideal form, occurs as a process of organizing action around the selected possibilities to transform them from one constituent of the order of possibility (i.e., the least likely) to the constituent that is most likely. That is, ambition works to transform the selected constellation of possibilities from the merely plausible (or even from the impossible) to the probable, from the probable to the likely, and, then, from the likely to the determined, insofar as determination is actualizable.

The aim of an ambition is the actualization of some constellation of possibilities. Its problem, on the other hand, is the *how* of that actualization. Prior to the problem of ambition, however, the selection of possibilities must occur.¹⁵ The invocation of ambition occurs as a result of exiting fear (in the species of foreboding), where the shift of emphasis of attention is redirected from the constellation of possibilities to be avoided toward the broader horizon of possibility.¹⁶ In fear, there is a negative selection of a constellation of possibilities. Along with this negative selection a demand is put forth that what has been selected out (i.e., excluded) should not become actual.¹⁷ Upon entry into the sentiment of ambition, the drive that provides the negative selection in fear becomes positive. The negative selection is still there, it is still present to the process of positive selection as a conditioning factor for it, but the emphasis has switched from avoidance of some constellations of possibility to embracing others, and the coupled moments are subsumed under a greater synthesis, though the primary

13) Things do happen in boredom, but there is very little ground from which to achieve an enriched appreciation of or aversion to the actual that constitutes the possibility of having a history.

14) The sentiments of boredom and ambition can coexist, so they are not mutually exclusive. To explain how boredom and ambition could cohabitate in experience would require further elaboration of the locus axis (described briefly in an earlier footnote) and a more comprehensive appreciation of event ontology. Unfortunately, given our present aim, we have neither the time nor space to accomplish these tasks here and now.

15) A selection is an interaction with the horizon of possibilities that requires a judgment of valuation of constellations of possibility, in part or in whole. These judgments can range in granularity from including many constellations of possibility to only a precise few possibilities that cannot be oppositional to each other in actuality. Their granularity is determined by the clarity or vagueness of the objective data available (including the actual and the possible) and the degree of concern that is present in the experience.

16) While I do believe that fully constituted ambition is always entered into alongside its complimentary sentiment, fear, there may be cases of ambition in which fear is not yet present. For example, a young person may develop a proto-ambitious sentiment that feels very much like full-fledged ambition but cannot appropriately be called such. This is because ambition as such requires a contrast between what selection is best and those that are not the best. The fully embodied ambition, then, requires an aversion to some possibilities for the sake of the best ones. Fear, then, may be discovered on the way to ambition rather than initiating ambition. Nevertheless, it does seem that one cannot be ambitious (in the developed sense) without fear.

17) It may be quite possible that negative selection and the demand that this selection is unactualized are one process. I separate the two here for the sake of analysis.

aversion is often forgotten.¹⁸ The resulting combination of these moments resolves itself in the positive manifestation of an aim. Ambition is thus constituted by the avoidance of one (or more) constellations of possibility through the achievement of another.

Having some appreciation for the process of ambition, we return to boredom. What we find upon our return is that boredom lacks an aim. This lack of an aim is why boredom is often described as a feeling of listlessness that results in understanding some event or events as also lacking purpose. Without an aim and without purpose, the horizon of futural possibility becomes the homogenized and banal monolith that significantly inhibits the process of differentiating possibility. The fluidity of experience in boredom is diminished significantly. We cannot welcome the future because the future has nothing significant to offer us. Things just happen, and we watch with indifference.

Ambition and Concern – Living with Purpose

Given that ambition provides us with an aim, we might expect that the phases of ambition would be highly fluid. This may be the case, at least when we compare the ambitious living to living boredom. However, there are events in the epoch of ambition that have lower fluidity than others. Concern provides us with an exemplary sentiment that belongs to the epoch of ambition where we find a transition from higher to lower fluidity. To understand how this transition occurs, we need to explore the process of concern through the imaginative reenactment of this sentiment.

When we find ourselves to be ambitious in our world, we are on our way toward actualizing some constellation of possibilities that we have selected according to a vague notion of the best possible life. The art of ambition, as you remember, is the transformation of the selected constellation of possibilities through the constituent orders that make up the totality of possibility. That is, the art of ambition is the shaping of material and ideal conditions so that the selected constellation transforms from one that is either impossible or merely possible through each constituent of the order of possibility into a constellation that is determined, if such a constellation can exist.

The reason we call this sentiment “ambition” is because it transforms constellations of possibility that are impossible or merely possible into highly probable events that then become, under ideal conditions, actualities. To transform some constellation from the likely to the highly probable does not warrant the name “ambition.” Ambition, it would seem, requires a diligent struggle against the past, present, and future conditions in an effort to bring about some constellation that could not have been without the struggle.

Ambition, then, is resistance to certain constellations of the future that would hinder or make impossible the achievement of the aim. At the same time, ambition struggles with the conditions of the past, present, and future to make the impossible (or merely plausible) determined. This tense (or intense) navigation of the horizon of possibility constitutes the struggle of ambition.

Because ambition is fundamentally temporal (as I believe all sentiments are) and, in addition, because the epoch of ambition endures long enough to transform the impossible (or the merely possible) into the actual, ambition and its fruits can take a significant duration to proceed from the germ of selection to the slow manifestation of the apex of achievement. Given the magnitude of the epoch of ambition, variation in the intensity of events (and the fluidity of those events) is inevitable in it. The factors that contribute to the fluidity of the events that constitute the epoch of ambition are the manifestation of simultaneous constellations of possibility that are relevant to the aim of ambition and the degrees of complex action that are

18) Remember that these processes of deselection and selection can and often do happen precognitively.

required to create artifacts that support, maintain, and ease the continued struggle toward the culminating achievement of ambition.¹⁹

We find that, most of the time, ambition requires navigating the horizon of possibility with a low degree of attention to the material or ideal conditions provided by the past and the present. We can shape possibility by varying these conditions without much effort. In such cases, we are often split-souled in our efforts. The secondary activity of managing the material or ideal conditions so that the transformation of the selected constellation is eased into higher probability requires very little attention. The primary efforts in such periods are directed toward forecasting.²⁰ This reflective type of action is highly complex. To uncover the processes that contribute to forecasting, we would have to forego our present aim in this essay. So, for the moment, we will put off defining forecasting with a high degree of granularity. It is, for our purposes, sufficient to note that forecasting is the process of exploring beyond the immediate horizon of possibility to locate significant manifestations of possibility that may emerge or to discover courses of action that provide to the struggle of ambition some additional characteristic (e.g., efficiency, beauty, modal significance, etc.).

There are other times during the epoch of ambition that the degree of attention required by the horizon of immediate possibility increases. This process of drawing our attention to the horizon of possibility takes us away from forecasting and directs us toward preparing the body for action. When relevancies appear in the horizon of possibility that require our attention, they can do so in the two ways mentioned above. The first avenue to preparing the body for action occurs when a significant quantity of constellations of possibility show up in the horizon that require attention (and, ultimately, action) in relation to the struggle of ambition. The second avenue occurs when some constellation of possibility requires a complex coordination of actions to produce an artifact. While both avenues to attentiveness are primarily qualitative, the former lends itself to quantification more than the latter. The key to understanding both avenues of drawing attention to the horizon of possibility (rather than investing efforts in the processes of forecasting) is found in the complexity of action.

In the first mode of attentiveness, we find that a complex series of actions is adapted to shaping multiple constellations of possibility that appear simultaneously within the horizon of possibility. The ideal result of this complex series of actions is the shifting of the culminating achievement of ambition toward the probable. The same result is the aim of the second mode of attentiveness, where the constellation of possibilities action is directed to is singular. Both modes of attentiveness, in a sense, are the same in that they require complex action. They feel different, however, because attentiveness in the first mode requires a broader scope of attention, whereas the second mode is more focused.

Whether we enter attentiveness through the first or second mode (or somewhere in between these extremes), we discover there the sentiment of concern (at least as it relates to ambition). Concern is the transformation of attention toward the immediate horizon of possibility where the body is prepared for action on or in relation to constellations of possibility that are relevant to the aim of ambition. In these moments of concern, we

19) By “artifacts” I mean events that require a high degree of effort to transform them from possibilities to actualities. These artifacts can be understood as micro-achievements or significant accomplishments on the way to the culminating achievement of the aim of ambition.

20) Peirce introduced abduction as a form of inference from specific observations to the best possible explanation, where many different explanations are available. Forecasting, as I see it, is not quite the same process (though I believe abduction is a part of what is happening in forecasting). The aim of forecasting is to locate anticipatable signs in the horizon of possibility that act as indicators of forthcoming constellations of possibility that will help or hinder the achievement of ambition. These signs prepare the forecaster through the enrichment of the capacity of anticipation. For more on abduction, see: Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, ed. Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 226–241.

shift from an intensity of experience that is higher fluidity toward lower fluidity in accordance with the degree and scope of attention that is required for adequate action in relation to the epoch of ambition.

Having laid out our analyses of boredom, ambition, and concern (insofar as they are helpful for our task of locating a relationship between meaning and fluidity), we will now shift focus from sentiment analysis to addressing meaning. First, though, I would like to say something about meaning as it relates to my interests.

Meaning – A Caveat

Much of the contemporary discussion of meaning in scholarly circles centers around language.²¹ While I cannot deny the value of the relationship between meaning and language, I am not primarily interested in that relationship. I do agree with those philosophers who advocate that language shapes the articulation of meaning and, further, language may have an effect on the way we deploy attention to experience. However, I do not find any satisfying reason to believe that language encompasses all of meaning. Experience shows that meaning is fundamentally a bodily experience that occurs as a result of the feeling of duration (and passage) in relation to the feeling of utility.²² This characteristic of utility is noted by Bergson, who cautions us against giving over to this feeling of utility the capacity to understand the world as such. Bergson's psychological principle describes this character: "in psychological analysis we must never forget the utilitarian character of our mental functions, which are essentially turned toward action."²³ Meaning, then, as we ought to understand it, is (minimally) a psychological phenomenon that emphasizes the principle of utility, which is always directed toward action. Language, understood in this context, is a highly developed and complex way of articulating social utility. However, to accomplish such articulations requires a body that feels meaning prior to any possible articulation of it. Further, any articulation of feeling is necessarily an exclusion of some of its richness for the sake of describing or explaining parts of that experience that are subjected to a light of relevance (which is determined by an aim). The richness of experience, then, cannot be articulated by language based upon the simple fact that the act of speech is an act of abstraction in accordance with *one* aim. Experience provides us with a multitude of ambiguities and feelings. These ambiguous interactions are not meaningless, and yet they require a selection from the endless horizon of possibilities that are available to the adjudicator of meaning. This relationship between meaning and the body is where my broader interest lies.

Transformations of Fluidity

We return now to the fluidity axis of experience. Through our investigations into boredom, ambition, and concern, we find that the presence of an aim influences how we feel the horizon of possibility. As an aim integrates into experience, we discover purpose, value, and meaning. In the experience of boredom, something has gone awry. Strangely enough, we may still have a historically cherished aim. However, in boredom, this aim no longer seems to fit well with our anticipatable horizon of possibility. Because aims give rise to the possi-

21) The multitude of discussions regarding language as the central (and sometimes exclusive) domain of meaning can be found in thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, Alasdair MacIntyre, Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, and so on. For Ernst Cassirer, language and myth are also highly important to developing meaning. See the volumes dedicated to philosophy of symbolic forms and *The Myth of the State*.

22) See any of the books by Mark Johnson dedicated to the relation between meaning and the body.

23) Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and William Scott Palmer (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), xvii.

bility of meaning, a disjointed aim ends in a failure or a loss of meaning. This fluctuation of meaning, in turn, disposes us to the horizon of possibility in the mode of indifference and experience takes on the characteristic of low fluidity.

To achieve an increase in fluidity in the experience of boredom, we must reestablish our historically cherished aim within the horizon of possibility. Alternatively, if this selection of possibility as an aim can no longer function as a viable guide to action or no longer offers us the significance that we once found in it, we must find another aim. When we succeed and the aim has integrated into the horizon of possibility as an aim, we will find that value, purpose, and meaning reappear. In the return of meaning, we find that fluidity returns.

We might be tempted to conclude that a decrease or loss of meaning decreases fluidity, slowing the passage of duration. This hypothesis, however, is easily falsifiable. If we take as our test case the sentiment of concern, we discover that meaning, as it is associated with the constellations of possibility that are important to the achievement of an aim, increases. And yet, entry into concern shifts the experience from higher to lower fluidity. We have, then, two cases of the transformation of experience from higher to lower fluidity, but one of them has an increase of meaning in the horizon of possibility (concern) and the other has a decrease of meaning (boredom). Each of them involves a fluctuation of meaning that correlates to a transition in fluidity. However, both of these sentiments transform fluidity in the same direction (from higher to lower).

So, if what has been offered here is correct, it is safe to say that fluctuations of meaning play a role in transforming experience on the axis of fluidity. However, it would appear that, for the moment, exactly how this relationship works is as of yet unclear. Fortunately, I do have a hypothesis that needs to be run through some genetic analyses of other sentiments that may clarify this relation further. My hypothesis is that losses of meaning or *threats to the maintenance of meaning* transform experience from higher to lower fluidity. The axiom that this hypothesis relies upon is that actions that are relevant to an aim are tests of meaning, value, and purpose, and, ultimately, the aim itself.²⁴ If this hypothesis is correct, it would mean that actions that occur within the sentiment of concern are tests of the system of meanings, values, and purposes as determined by the integrated aim. That is to say, when we act through the sentiment of concern, we understand to some degree that the structures of purpose, value, and meaning we have adopted are being tested against concrete experience. Along with understanding that our worldview is being tested is the existential threat (in the horizon of possibility) of failure in the face of experience. If boredom is a case of suffering the *loss of meaning*, it seems fair to characterize concern as the felt *threat of the loss of meaning*. It would make sense, then, that the experience of concern, even as meaning increases, would be lower fluidity. This hypothesis, of course, requires more theoretical analysis of various other sentiments to establish it more securely. However, it does appear to be promising.

24) I use "axiom" here to designate a good place for starting thought.

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