Varieties of Temporal Experience in Depression

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Abstract: People with depression often report alterations in their experience of time, a common complaint being that time has slowed down or stopped. In this paper, I argue that depression can involve a range of qualitatively different changes in the structure of temporal experience, some of which I proceed to describe. In addition, I suggest that current diagnostic categories such as 'major depression' are insensitive to the differences between these changes. I conclude by briefly considering whether the kinds of temporal experience associated with depression are specific to depression.

1. Introduction

First-person accounts of depression often refer to alterations in the experience of time. The most common complaint is that time has slowed down considerably or even stopped. Here are some responses to the question "when you are depressed, does time seem different to you?", taken from a 2011 web-based questionnaire study that I carried out with my colleagues Benedict Smith and Hannah Shand:

> "It goes very, very slowly. Like I remember lying awake at about 4am in my uni room and it was going so slowly, all I had to do was get through to the morning so I could get some help and it seemed almost impossible just to get through those few hours because it was taking so long."
> "Things seem much slower, time drags".
> "Time seems to drag. A day feels like a year."
> "Time goes so slowly when I'm feeling really bad."[1]

So a simple account of time consciousness in depression would be that sufferers experience a pronounced increase in the perceived duration of events, which can also be described in terms of the rate at which time flows. Some psychiatrists and phenomenologists claim that this is exactly what happens. For instance, Vogeley and Kupke (2007, p.162) suggest that there is a "systematic change in velocity", which

[1] This study was part of the AHRC- and DFG-funded project 'The Experience of Depression: a Philosophical Study'.

leaves the "basic temporal structure" intact. They add that changes in the experience of time that occur in depression are thus less extreme than what happens in schizophrenia. In the latter, the overall *structure* of temporal experience is affected, rather than just the *rate* at which time passes. There is empirical evidence to support the view that depression involves experience of time slowing down; it seems that depressed subjects consistently over-estimate time intervals (Vogeley and Kupke, 2007; Ghaemi, 2007). However, this does not preclude the possibility of additional changes in some or all instances. Indeed, it could be that altered experience of duration is itself symptomatic of changes in the structure of temporal experience - in how past, present, future and the transition between them are experienced. Several other responses to our questionnaire suggest something more than a change in perceived duration.[2] For example:

> "When I am depressed I feel like time goes slowly, yet at the same time I feel like I – or anyone else – has hardly any time to live at all. It feels as if time is running out."
> "When depressed, time seems to slow down, and to a certain point can become irrelevant. It is easy to lose track of days without realising it."
> "Yes, days go past slower and more boring feeling like everything's going to drag on. On the other hand can feel like life going too fast and the years are flying by and start getting depressed thinking not long to live now etc."
> "I just felt very detached from time, it simply didn't matter".
> "When I am depressed I don't seem to notice time, it just doesn't matter to me, it all seems to blend into a mass of nothing. [….] Time loses significance."

There are two further themes here. For some people, although time seems to slow down, there is also the feeling that it is running out; death is approaching at high speed. Others report an experience of detachment from time, a sense of its irrelevance. It is not clear how these two aspects of experience relate – whether they sometimes, always or never occur together. We should at least be open to the possibility that different accounts reflect different kinds of experience, and that time consciousness in depression is heterogeneous. In fact, several respondents to our questionnaire study stated that depression had no effect at all upon their experience of time.

[2] Most of our respondents were diagnosed with 'depression' or 'major depression', and many had other psychiatric diagnoses too. Different kinds of response did not correspond to different diagnoses.

There has not been much phenomenological discussion of depression and time or, indeed, of any other aspect of depression (compared to schizophrenia, which has received far more attention from phenomenologists). However, temporal experience in depression is discussed by Eugene Minkowski (1970), Erwin Straus (1947), Hubertus Tellenbach (1980), and Thomas Fuchs (2001, 2003, forthcoming), amongst others. Taking some recent and very helpful work by Fuchs as my starting point, I will argue that the experience of time can take several different forms in depression. The point applies even if we restrict ourselves to a more specific diagnostic category. For example, all of the alterations in temporal experience that I discuss in what follows are consistent with a 'major depressive episode', as specified by DSM-IV, although I do not wish to suggest that any of them are exclusive to that diagnosis. As temporal experience is inextricable from and also central to the more general structure of experience, it follows that there are phenomenologically quite different kinds of 'depression'. These differ in ways that current diagnostic systems, such as DSM-IV and ICD-10, are insensitive to.[3] In what follows, I will not attempt to offer a comprehensive phenomenological account of depression and time, but I will at least sketch an interpretive framework that allows us to make some important phenomenological distinctions. In the process, I will briefly describe some of the changes in temporal experience that can occur in depression.

2. Fuchs on Depression and Time

In some recent papers, Fuchs (e.g. 2001, 2003, 2005, forthcoming) describes temporal changes that occur in depression and, more specifically, melancholic depression.[4] In the process, he makes some useful phenomenological distinctions, which I will critically discuss and further develop here. Most important is the distinction between implicit and explicit time (Fuchs, 2005, forthcoming). As I write, I am not thinking about time. Rather, I inhabit it; it is implicit. In contrast, when I am waiting for a bus and keep looking at my watch, I become explicitly aware of temporal phenomena such as 'lateness'. Fuchs (2003, forthcoming) maintains that this distinction is intimately associated with that between the lived body [*Leib*] and the corporeal body

[3] Many others have pointed out that 'depression' or even 'severe depression' encompasses a range of different predicaments. For instance, Ehrenberg (2010, xv) remarks upon the "incredible heterogeneity" of the "depressive phenomenon".
[4] Fuchs' conception of melancholic depression appears to be compatible with the DSM-IV description of a major depressive episode with melancholic features.

[*Körper*]. The corporeal body is an object of experience or thought; it is phenomenologically conspicuous. The lived body, in contrast, is that through which we experience, think and act. It is, as Husserl (1989, p.61) says, a “medium” or “organ” of perception, rather than an object of perception. According to Fuchs, we are oblivious to our corporeal bodies when we are comfortably immersed in activity. It is when things go wrong that the body becomes conspicuous – when our actions meet with unexpected failure, when we are uncomfortable or in pain, when we find ourselves unable to complete some task, or when we feel socially awkward or ashamed. Similarly, implicit time is associated with absorption in activity, and explicit time with feeling disengaged from projects. Fuchs does acknowledge, however, that a simple distinction between implicit time, which is experienced when our projects go smoothly, and explicit time, which is experienced when they break down, is too simple. Even when we are immersed in activity, we usually retain at least some attentiveness to time. For example, I might be absorbed in giving a talk but occasionally glance at the clock. Conversation is often like this too; even when it goes fairly well, we are aware of temporal phenomena such as an overly long pause or an untimely interruption. To further complicate matters, it is arguable that people are sometimes absorbed in explicit time, such as when an athlete waits for the whistle that will start an important race. Even so, we can at least draw a rough distinction between explicit time, which is an object of experience, and implicit time, which shapes our experience of situations but is not itself an object of experience.

Fuchs maintains that depression affects both implicit and explicit time. He distinguishes two aspects of implicit time: an “affective-conative momentum” and what Edmund Husserl calls its “protentional-retentional” structure (Fuchs, forthcoming). In addition, he emphasises the intersubjectivity of temporal experience: our experiences and activities are ordinarily temporally synchronised with those of others, as illustrated by instances when we experience our own actions or those of people we are interacting with as being too early or too late (Fuchs, 2001, forthcoming). It is fairly easy to get some idea of what Fuchs means by ‘conative drive’. It is a temporal orientation that we ordinarily take for granted, which incorporates a disposition towards activity - the future draws us in. It is not a matter of having explicit desires or motives, but of feeling propelled towards a meaningful

future in a manner that such attitudes presuppose.[5] However, his appeal to Husserl requires further explanation. Husserl maintains that, when we perceive objects, we do not first perceive a collection of synchronic, two-dimensional appearances and then stitch them together by means of conscious inference. Instead, we encounter a realm of interrelated objects of various kinds, which are experienced as fully present. How can we perceive a whole object when all we can see at any one time is a two-dimensional appearance (and when none of our other senses facilitate perception of the whole object either)? According to Husserl, perceptual content incorporates more than what actually appears; we also perceive various kinds of possibility. A drinking glass appears as something with another side, which could be revealed by moving round it and viewing it from another angle. The visually perceived object also incorporates possibilities for other senses, such as the potential to be touched or grasped. These possibilities appear with varying degrees of determinacy. We might simply take for granted that the other side of the glass has certain properties such as smoothness. Alternatively, the experienced possibility could take the less determinate form of 'it can be turned round to reveal some set of properties or other'. In addition, the possibilities we perceive implicate other people – the glass appears as something potentially perceptually and practically accessible to others.

Husserl maintains that these perceived possibilities together comprise a structured system, which he calls the object's "horizon". The horizonal structure of experience is not something that we piece together knowingly; we experience only the completed phenomenological achievement. So it is a matter of what Husserl calls "passive synthesis", in contrast to effortful "active synthesis". A horizon contributes to our sense of what something is and equally to our sense that it is. It is not a static structure; many perceived possibilities take the form of a felt, non-conceptual *anticipation* of what the immediate future will be like. Hence our experience of entities involves a structured process: as certain possibilities are actualised, others appear, and so on (Husserl, 1973, 2001). It is thus inextricable from what we might call the experienced 'flow' of time. Husserl suggests that temporal experience incorporates "protention", by which he means an experienced anticipation of certain possibilities being realised in certain ways, which gives us a variably determinate

[5] It is similar to what Minkowski (1970), drawing on Bergson, refers to as the "élan vital" and what Straus (1947) calls a state of "becoming".

sense of what will happen next. This anticipation is not 'added on' to an independently constituted sense of the present. Experience of an entity as present incorporates a sense of possibilities and, more specifically, a sense of anticipation. Husserl adds that the immediate past is similarly inextricable from experience of the present. Once a set of possibilities is actualised, we do not continue to experience something as present until it completely fades away. Instead, there is a "retention", an experience of something *as* just past (e.g. Husserl, 1991, p.89). Our experience of what might be called the 'flow' of time thus involves a structured interplay of protention and retention. An oft used example of this is listening to a melody. Even if you haven't heard it before, there is an anticipation of roughly what will come next, as demonstrated by the surprise experienced when a note is out of tune. Notes that have just passed are not retained as a fading present, and neither do they cease to be experienced altogether. Instead, they are experienced as having just passed. According to Husserl, all experience has this protentional-retentional structure.[6] My focus in what follows will be on protention, rather than retention - upon the anticipated actualisation of various kinds of experienced possibility.

According to Fuchs, schizophrenia involves disruption of passive synthesis and, more specifically, protention. The structured interplay of possibilities breaks down, and experience thus becomes disordered, fragmented. In contrast, he suggests that melancholia is a matter of "intersubjective desynchronisation" and "disturbance of conation". With this, ordinarily implicit time becomes explicit. Hence there is no disturbance of passive synthesis in melancholic depression: the "constitutive synthesis of inner time consciousness remains intact"; "what is lacking instead is the conative dynamics" (Fuchs, forthcoming). With a loss of conation, the sufferer is presented with a future that lacks openness; it no longer appears as a domain of possible activity. Consequently, the effects of past deeds appear fixed; there is no future where they might be compensated for. Fuchs is critical of earlier phenomenological approaches, such as that of Straus (1947), for being too individualistic. He maintains that a felt lack of synchrony with others is equally central to the experience of depression. There is a "basic feeling of being in accord with the time of the others, and to live with them in the same, intersubjective time". Loss of synchrony is

[6] See Carr (1986), Gallagher (1998) and Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, Chapter 4) for good discussions of Husserl on time consciousness.

commonplace, but depression is distinctive insofar as it involves a "complete desynchronization" (2001, pp-181-2). Fuchs adds that intersubjective desychronisation, coupled with a fixed past from which there is no hope of redemption, amounts to an all-pervasive feeling of irrevocable guilt (e.g. 2003).[7]

Something along these lines might well apply to some cases of major depression, especially those that are characterised by DSM-IV as having 'melancholic features'.[8] However, in what follows, I will argue that the category 'major depression' encompasses a range of different changes in the structure of temporal experience. To do so, I will begin by challenging Fuchs' claim that melancholia (and, presumably, depression more generally) affects conative drive but does not disrupt passive synthesis. I will describe and distinguish three phenomena, the first two of which are integral to what Husserl calls 'passive synthesis': [1] a capacity to find things practically significant; [2] the allure of the world; [3] finding a particular range of things significant in the context of life projects. I will identify 'conative drive' with [2], and will argue that the phenomenology of depression is sometimes attributable to [1] or [3] rather than [2], or to a combination of [2] with [1] or [3].

3. Implicit Time and the Loss of Significance

I do not think that conation should be set apart from passive synthesis and protention. Passive synthesis, for Husserl, gives us the structured world that we ordinarily take for granted. It is a phenomenological achievement that requires no conscious performance. And Husserl seems to indicate that what Fuchs calls conative drive is integral to that achievement. He refers to a "striving" of the ego, which is integral to protention and presupposed by explicit attitudes such as desiring (Husserl, 2001, p.128). He is also clear that some of the possibilities we experience as belonging to the world appear as "enticing"; they solicit various kinds of response from us (2001, p.83). Later on, he refers to the "allure" of things, to the "peculiar pull" that they have

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[7] See Minkowski (1958) for a similar account of melancholic guilt. See also Ratcliffe (2010) for a discussion of guilt in depression.

[8] Fuchs (forthcoming) draws upon Tellenbach's (1980) phenomenological characterisation of "typus melancholicus", a character type disposed towards melancholic depression. However, focusing exclusively upon one form of major depression (which is allegedly associated with a distinctive set of character traits) strikes me as rather restrictive. Even if Fuchs' phenomenological account is broadly right, there is the concern that it may apply only to a minority of those diagnosed with 'major' or 'severe' depression. There is a diversity of character types and, I suspect, of depressions.

on us, drawing in our attention (2001, p.196). Hence conative drive (or something that sounds very like it) does not have a purely internal phenomenology; it manifests itself as a subset of the world's possibilities. It is worth adding that Husserl (2001) discusses these various achievements under the heading "analyses concerning passive synthesis". His emphasis is upon perception, rather than goal-directed action. Objects solicit us to act in ways that actualise enticing perceptual possibilities, amounting to a kind of curiosity that permeates world-experience. However, it seems plausible to maintain that pull of the world is not restricted to possibilities for perception - practical possibilities similarly draw us in.

It is important to distinguish conation, construed as the perceptual and practical allure of the world, from something that it is closely associated with: the ability to find things practically significant in various ways. Only some of the many things that I experience as practically significant (by which I mean simply 'relevant in the context of a set of goals, projects and values') actually draw me in. For example, I can recognise the significance of a hammer without feeling drawn to pick it up and start hammering nails into a wall. Husserl appreciates that we do not first encounter the world as a realm of value-neutral objects and afterwards throw a shroud of significance over them. The entities that we encounter in everyday life are significant to us from the outset:

> In ordinary life, we have nothing whatever to do with nature-Objects. What we take as things are pictures, statues, gardens, houses, tables, clothes, tools, etc. These are all value-Objects of various kinds, use-Objects, practical Objects. They are not Objects which can be found in natural science. (Husserl, 1989, p.29)

A sense of something's significance is, at the same time, a sense of its offering certain possibilities. And I suggest that practically significant possibilities should be regarded as integral to passive synthesis. I am fairly confident that this is Husserl's view too, although he is not very clear on the matter.[9] However, regardless of what Husserl might have thought, I think it is the correct view, and that we can appeal to first-

[9] See Overgaard (2004, pp.128-9) for a defence of the view that Husserl treats practical possibilities, rather than just perceptual possibilities, as integral to the horizonal structure of experience. Overgaard's case is based upon writings that were still unpublished in 2004.

person accounts of severe depression in order to support it. Suppose the world were altogether divested of practically significant possibilities. Surely, everything would appear strange, incomplete, or even unreal. Perhaps even one's sense of what things are would start to break down. This is just what some people with very severe depression report - it affects not only drive but the ability to experience things as significant. Consider the following passage:

> ….it was if the whatness of each thing – I'm no good at philosophical terminology – but the essence of each thing in the sense of the tableness of the table or the chairness of the chair or the floorness of the floor was gone. There was a mute and indifferent object in that place. [….] It became impossible to reach anything. Like, how do I get up and walk to that chair if the essential thing that we mean by chair, something that lets us sit down and rest or upholds us as we read a book, something that shares our life in that way, has lost the quality of being able to do that? [….] You've lost a habitable earth. You've lost something that people don't even know is. That's why it's so hard to explain.
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> (Quoted by Hornstein, 2009, pp.212-13)

Such an extreme loss of practical meaning may be unusual, even in very severe depression. But many people report losing a sense of things as practically significant, rather than just drive or enticing possibility. To quote one of my questionnaire respondents, "the world looks very different when depressed as I find my life becomes valueless. The world seems very bleak and there seems to be no point in anything. All actions and tasks become pointless and irritating". However, loss of significance is often first-person-specific rather than total. Sufferers are unable to contemplate the possibility of anything appearing significant in the context of their own lives, but they are still able to appreciate that things at least *seem* significant to others (which is not to imply that the lives of others really do incorporate significant possibilities – their predicament might be construed as one of blissful ignorance). As another respondent writes, "it reminds me of that W. H. Auden poem *Funeral Blues* – from my perspective it feels like how can nobody else see how pointless life is, how can everyone else be going around being happy".[10] However, others do describe a loss that equally envelops their appreciation of other people's activities, an inability to

[10] These are both responses to the question "Does the world look different when you're depressed? If so, how?"

grasp how anything could appear practically significant for anyone (Ratcliffe, 2010, p.617).

Does a loss of experienced practical significance, whether specific to one's own life or more general in its reach, affect what Husserl calls 'passive synthesis'? Surely the answer is yes. Passive synthesis does not become unstructured in depression, in the way that Fuchs suggests it does in schizophrenia. However, something is absent from its structure. By analogy, removing the roof from a building is not as dramatic as blowing it to pieces. Even so, there is still a major structural change. Likewise in depression, experience has a structure but an aspect of it is missing. Loss of practical significance also amounts to a profound change in temporal experience. Without any sense that things could ever be significantly different, a kind of anticipation that more usually shapes the present is lost. The experience of significant possibilities being actualised, which characterises the transition from future to present to past, is lost too. The immediate and longer term future is just 'more of the same'; it ceases to offer anything new. In so far as our experience incorporates significant possibilities, it also incorporates a sense of its own contingency - a sense that this is not all there is or ever could be. In their absence, the potential for significant change is gone from one's world. Hence the predicament is experienced as eternal, inescapable. Time Lott, in his autobiographical account of depression, describes it as follows:

> I have absolutely no faith, in fact, in anything. In a muddy way, I see that depression manifests itself as a crisis of faith. Not religious faith, but the almost born instinct that things are fluid, that they unfold and change, that new kinds of moment are eventually possible, that the future will arrive. I am in a time-locked place, where the moment I am in will stretch on, agonizingly, for ever. There is no possibility of redemption or hope. It is a final giving up on everything. It is death. (Lott, 1996, pp.246-7)

Many other first-person accounts convey the same thing; there is no appreciation that things could ever be significantly different, no hope, no possibility of recovery. As another author remarks, "in the middle of a depressive episode, it is impossible to believe it will pass" (Burnard, 2006, p.244).[11] It is not, first and foremost, conative

[11] See also Wyllie (2005) and Ratcliffe (2008, Chapter 6) for discussion of this sense that depression is inescapable and recovery impossible.

drive that is lost here, but a sense of there being significant worldly possibilities, something that conation usually presupposes.

It could be maintained that losing conative drive is an inevitable symptom of losing practical significance. If nothing appears significant, nothing can appear enticing. So there is nothing for the drive to act upon. However, I think we need to distinguish three scenarios:

1. Drive is lost, along with practical significance
2. Things still appear enticing and so drive remains, although it is undirected, cut off from any ordered system of significant possibilities.
3. Enticing possibilities are lost too but the drive persists. It becomes a conspicuous bodily agitation, rather than manifesting itself as the allure of the world.

Perhaps something like [3] characterises certain "mixed states" that go by names such as "anxious" or "agitated" depression. And [2] may well capture the structure of mania, where one is caught up in the present, leaping from one thing to the next without any orientation towards the long-term future. Binswanger (1964, p.130) describes more extreme forms of the "manic mode of being-in-the world" as active but unfocused - one is immersed in an "aimless, meaningless, empty busy-ness". Rather than nothing appearing enticing, "everything is 'handy' for the patient, is at once 'handled' and 'played away'. So he is continually on the move". However, the patient lives in an enticing present, rather than in a longer term teleological system where things appear practically significant in the light of stable goals, commitments and projects. It is worth noting that mixed states, some of which include mania or hypomania, are arguably more common than "unipolar depression" (Ghaemi, 2007). Hence it is seems plausible to suggest that [1] to [3] above are all forms of experience that occur, rather than mere phenomenological possibilities. They involve different experiences of time and, more specifically, the future. When drive and significance are lost, there is just sameness; there is no anticipation of significant change. When drive remains without teleology, there is an unstructured, short-term allure. And, when drive becomes bodily agitation, there is a feeling of urgency without any outlet.

Experience of the future as 'just more of the same' affects one's ordinarily implicit sense of temporal flow, but it is not restricted to that. It is important to acknowledge an additional aspect of implicit time that we might call 'teleological time', which is partly responsible for a longer-term sense of direction. Fuchs restricts implicit time to the dimensions of protention-retention and conation. However, distinct from both is a sense of the ongoing projects and commitments that render things significant to us. Of course, one might object that this longer-term sense of time is not implicit at all; it is an explicit grasp of where we are heading. But that would be implausible. As I type these words, my activities are intelligible in the context of the project of writing a paper, which is embedded in the project of being an academic, something that gives meaning to many of my daily activities. Although I am not explicitly aware of these projects as I act, they still render my activities intelligible and constitute a sense of working towards something, a teleological direction. As Heidegger (1962), Sartre (1989) and others emphasise, the world that we take for granted in everyday life reflects our projects. The significance that we experience as integral to things, and that in turn structures our activities, is itself symptomatic of the projects we are committed to. Sartre offers the example of a crag that appears to a climber as "too difficult to climb" (1989, p.482). This significance, which is experienced as belonging to the rock, reflects the project that the climber is pursuing. But she does not have to make that project explicit in order for her world to be structured in terms of it. A person might even be unable to conceptualise and articulate an implicit, long-term project that regulates her activities. This is exemplified by Sartre's call for an "existential psychoanalysis", the aim of which is to uncover the fundamental but unacknowledged project that shapes one's life (1989, p.570).

A complete loss of practical significance from the world would not only be an impoverishment of protention. It would also be a collapse of all the projects that shape experience and regulate activity, a loss of teleological time.[12] This need not amount to a total loss of longer-term temporal direction; one would still be able to identify *x* as happening before *y*, *y* before *z*, and so on. Even so, there would be a substantial change in the experience of temporal direction. Imagine a life that involved nothing

[12] Even though the phenomenology of implicit time is not exhausted by protention, it might be that protention is more fundamental than teleological time, as it is plausible to maintain that one can have protention without teleological time but not vice versa.

but watching a spot trace a circle on a screen in front of you over and over again, with no sense of there being any alternative to such a pattern. You might still have an experience of anticipation and completion. For example, 'it has not yet reached the top of the screen'; 'it is moving towards the bottom'. Hence some aspects of protention would remain. However, it is not clear that a longer-term sense of linear direction would be sustainable. Time would instead take a cyclic form. Unless some kind of teleological structure were imposed, thus making a particular cycle or number of cycles significant in some way (for example, 'if it reaches ten cycles, I win some money'; 'if it reaches one hundred cycles, something bad might happen'), there would be nothing to distinguish one cycle from the next, nothing to facilitate a sense of 'having moved on'.

Something not unlike this can happen in depression. Of course, a variety of events occur during the course of a day, even when one is depressed. So it differs in that respect. Even so, there is nothing to distinguish one day from the next - nothing stands out; nothing makes a difference. So time loses something of its longer term direction and takes on a more cyclic form.[13] For example, Minkowski (1958, pp.132-3) describes a patient for whom "each day kept an unusual independence, failing to be immersed in the perception of any life continuity; each day began anew, like a solitary island in a gray sea of passing time". Nothing matters and there is thus no way of individuating days or putting them in a linear order.[14] Whatever sense of longer-term temporal direction remains in such a case, it is surely impoverished; the possibility of longer term, significant temporal change is gone from experience.

4. Loss of Drive and Loss of Life-Projects

I have suggested that major depression can involve a partial or perhaps even total loss of practical significance from the world, instead of or in addition to a loss of what Fuchs calls 'conative drive'. However, this does not apply to all cases, and others probably are characterised by diminished conation without loss of significance. The person retains a sense of what it is for things to be significant and also an appreciation

[13] This is not to imply that longer term, implicit temporal experience is more usually linear in contrast to cyclic. It may have both aspects. Many of our activities have a place in a repeating cycle, such as a week, a month or a year. For example, we might say 'it's that time of year again'. The significance we experience in things may reflect these cycles, as well as more linear teleological structures.

[14] See Broome (2005) for a discussion of this kind of experience. Broome relates it to a scenario entertained by Nietzsche, involving 'eternal recurrence of the same'.

of certain projects as worthwhile. All the same, there is little or no will to act. What we have is a more extreme and prolonged version of the everyday scenario where we sigh wearily and say that we 'can't be bothered' to do something that we previously regarded as worth doing. We still care, but we do not - or perhaps cannot - summon the inclination to act. However, depression differs from such everyday instances. Rather than lacking the will to act it at a particular time and in relation to a particular project, one lacks it altogether – it is gone from experience. Descriptions such as the following suggest something like this:

> To get out of bed at midday was an ordeal. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to, no interest in anything – in short I felt totally apathetic. I couldn't even be bothered to talk to my girlfriend or father, the two people who were closest to me. I had no interests at all. I wouldn't even listen to the radio or stereo, or watch TV, never mind go out. I never even felt the desire to drink beer.[15]

As discussed in Section 3, the relevant predicament should not be construed simply as the loss of some *internal* feeling. Loss of feeling is at the same time a loss of what Husserl calls "enticing possibilities" from the world; things no longer draw us in, perceptually or practically. Actions – when they do occur – are solicited in a different way. For example, J. S. Mill, in his *Autobiography*, reports how he was not incapable of acting but did things only "mechanistically", "by the mere force of habit": "I had been so drilled in a certain sort of mental exercise, that I could still carry it on when all spirit had gone out of it" (1873, pp.139-40). I suggested earlier that Husserl would have regarded loss of conation as something that affects passive synthesis: a kind of possibility that we ordinarily take for granted is gone from the world. However, it might be objected that enticing possibilities do not contribute to our sense of what things are or our sense that things are. I agree that we could still experience and identify objects in the absence of any enticement or allure from the world. Even so, there would be a profound change in the overall structure of world-experience. A world drained of the relevant kinds of affective import would appear somehow detached, not quite there, incomplete. Consider this description by William James:

[15] Account by a psychiatric nurse who suffered from depression, from Read and Reynolds eds (1996, pp.35-6).

> In certain forms of melancholic perversion of the sensibilities and reactive powers, nothing touches us intimately, rouses us, or wakens natural feeling. The consequence is the complaint so often heard from melancholic patients, that nothing is believed in by them as it used to be, and that all sense of reality is fled from life. They are sheathed in india-rubber; nothing penetrates to the quick or draws blood, as it were. [….] "I see, I hear!" such patients say, "but the objects do not reach me, it is as if there were a wall between me and the outer world!" (1890, p.298)

At least part of what is going on here is the removal of enticing possibilities from the world; things no longer move us perceptually and practically in the ways they once did. And this is inextricable from a diminishment of the usual sense of reality, from a sense of being *there*, part of the same realm as the objects we encounter perceptually. In so far as this sense of reality is an achievement of passive synthesis, a loss of conation affects passive synthesis. Although objects are recognised as 'what they are', something is missing from them, some quality. Also missing from experience is an aspect of temporal flow - the anticipation and actualisation of enticing possibilities, a future that draws us in. I think Fuchs is right to emphasise that the relevant experience also involves "desynchronisation". The person still 'cares', in the sense that he has projects and commitments, but he watches the world go by. It is as though the strings that bind him to the world, that pull him towards entities, are gone. He is uncoupled from the world, drifting free of it. What remains intact, however, is a long-term sense of the future; things that matter to him and to others still materialise in a structured way. In addition, the phenomenology of protention is less impoverished than it would be if he also lacked a sense of anything as significant.

I have distinguished two broad predicaments, loss of significance and loss of drive, both of which characterise some cases of depression. However, there is also a third. Here, one retains a grasp of what it would be to find things practically significant, but all or most of one's projects have – for whatever reason - collapsed. Hence hardly anything does appear significant. This state could be associated with intact conative drive (in the form of a disposition to seek out and create new projects and possibilities) or diminished drive. A similar kind of collapse is described at length by Jonathan Lear in his book *Radical Hope*, which focuses upon the cultural erosion suffered by the Crow Nation in nineteenth-century America. Lear suggests that the

Crow may have faced a situation in which all their actions lost meaning, due to cultural changes that eroded the projects within which those activities were embedded. For instance, the proposition "either our warriors will be able to plant their coup-sticks or they will fail" ceased to make sense once tribal warfare was banned (Lear, 2006, p.25). But this, Lear says, did not eradicate all hope. What remained was "radical hope", a kind of openness to the possibility of again having projects and finding things significant, in ways that one cannot foresee.[16]

Although Lear is concerned with a whole culture rather than an individual, it is plausible to suggest that something like this can also happen at the level of the individual, in circumstances such as bereavement, divorce or loss of a career.[17] It is quite different from loss of significance and loss of drive, although it might lead to one, the other or both. The retention of "radical hope" involves the retention of conation. In addition, there is an intact sense that things *could* be practically significant – the problem is that they are not. So what we have is a change in the *content* of experience: projects that were central to a life have been lost. Consequently, things that used to appear significant no longer do. In contrast, the loss of significance I described earlier is a change in the *form* of experience. The person is no longer able to find things significant; the category 'practically significant' is gone from the experienced world. Although the two phenomena are structurally very different, they can be described in very similar ways – 'nothing matters anymore'. As Minkowski (1970, p.224) stresses, superficially similar descriptions can obscure profound phenomenological differences. And this is a case in point.

Interestingly, the DSM-IV criteria for a major depressive episode are insensitive to the considerable difference between losing however many possibilities of a kind and losing that kind altogether. Hence, as both types of experience almost certainly occur, we can assume that these very different phenomenological predicaments are often lumped together under the same diagnostic category. This would not be so much of a

[16] See Ratcliffe (in press) for a discussion of depression and radical hope.

[17] The relevant experience is something we tend to regard as appropriate to some situations but pathological in others. For instance, the loss of a home, a job and then a marriage could lead to a quite understandable collapse of patterns of activity and systems of practical significance. However, loss of a favourite pair of shoes would generally not. Although DSM-IV distinguishes depression from grief, its symptom-based diagnostic criteria for depression are otherwise oddly insensitive to distinctions between normal and pathological responses to life events (Horwitz and Wakefield, 2007).

problem if a unitary disease category could be identified by non-phenomenological means. However, all of the DSM-IV criteria for a major depressive episode are behavioural or phenomenological, with the exception of weight loss/gain. Amongst other things, there are references to depressed mood, loss of interest and/or pleasure, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, inability to concentrate, and thoughts of death (DSM-IV-TR, 2000, p.349).[18] The fact that diagnostic criteria fail to distinguish cases where there are changes in experiential content from those where the form of experience is affected might also explain why some sufferers report no noticeable change in their awareness of time. When the content of experience is affected, rather than the form, conation remains intact. Furthermore, the person retains a sense of teleological time; she still appreciates that significant events unfold in the lives of others, and she retains the ability to find things significant in the context of her own life. That said, temporal experience is most likely not completely unscathed. Loss of projects can involve feelings of desynchronisation, where the person feels that time is 'passing her by', that she is adrift. There is a perceived distinction between her long-term future, the 'personal future' and that of others. Whereas the former appears directionless, difficult, daunting and uncertain, the future of others unfolds in accord with projects and commitments. Their lives are regulated by structures that she lacks.

5. The Future as Threat

Loss of practical significance, loss of drive and loss of projects can all be accompanied by other phenomenological changes. For instance, many people with depression report that things look unobtainable or that action seems impossible. Although experience might incorporate significant or even enticing possibilities, these possibilities at the same time present themselves as impossible to actualise. This is not so different from certain everyday experiences. Suppose you go to visit the zoo, especially hoping to see a tiger, but that when you get to the zoo you see a sign that says 'zoo closed today'. What you feel is not simple disappointment, as when a team you support loses a football match. When that happens, the possibility has gone; there is nothing to be done about it. However, both the tiger and the possibility of seeing it remain. An appreciation of this and a degree of frustration linger on despite the disappointment. As you look at the 'zoo closed today' sign, you recognise your own

[18] Much the same point could be made with reference to the ICD-10 criteria for minor, moderate and severe depressive episodes.

inability to actualise something that is physically possible. Seeing the tiger presents itself as 'possible, but not amongst my own possibilities'; it is experienced as 'blocked', rather than simply disappointed. Something akin to this often happens in depression. However, it is not that specific activities are blocked. Rather, something conspires to make everything seem somehow difficult or impossible. For example, Law (2009, p.355) describes his experience as follows:

> When I'm depressed, every job seems bigger and harder. Every setback strikes me not as something easy to work around or get over but as a huge obstacle. Events appear more chaotic and beyond my control: if I fail to achieve some goal, it will seem that achieving it is forever beyond my abilities, which I perceive to be far more meagre than I did when I was not depressed.

The future changes from a realm where 'I can' to one where 'I cannot'. A plausible candidate for constituting this sense of impossibility is the anxiety or dread that so often accompanies depression.[19] Many sufferers report that the world, and other people too, appear oppressive, menacing, threatening.[20] In cases where practical significance and conation remain, there is a sense of being unable to actualise the possibilities that present themselves. But this kind of anxiety is worse when conation is lost, when there is no positive tendency towards action that might counter it. When practical significance is eroded too and one lacks a long-term, teleological future, the all-enveloping experience of threat can amount to what is often described as a feeling of impending death. Many (but certainly not all) first-person descriptions of depression relate such an experience. For example, Andrew Solomon remarks in his autobiographical account that "what is happening to you in depression is horrible, but it seems to be very much wrapped up in what is about to happen to you. Amongst other things, you feel you are about to die" (2001, p.27). As Minkowski observes, without the usual impetus towards the future, "the whole of becoming seems to rush toward us, a hostile force which must bring suffering" (1970, p.188). For one patient,

[19] This is not to suggest that anxiety is the only candidate. It may be that anxiety is primarily responsible for the sense of impossibility in some cases, but that other factors are more salient in others. For example, many people with depression complain of constant fatigue, which could equally amount to a sense of inability.

[20] Some argue that anxiety and depression should not be treated as distinct and that they have been artificially separated by current diagnostic practice. For example, Shorter and Tyrer (2003, p.158) complain that "the firewall between anxiety and depression ignores the fact that the commonest form of affective disorder is mixed anxiety-depression".

he says, it was “as if there were absolutely nothing between the present moment and death except the fruitless unfolding of time; this fills her with terror” (1970, p.304). Death seems imminent because there is no longer an organised sequence of significant events in which to situate it and distance it from the present.

We are now in a position to explain the seemingly paradoxical questionnaire responses I quoted in Section 1, where it was stated that time moved more slowly and yet more quickly. There is a change in the structure of protention, which no longer incorporates the anticipated actualisation of significant and/or enticing possibilities. In the absence of significant change, every moment seems to go on forever; there is no possibility of reprieve. Hence the ‘slowing down’ relates to short-term implicit time. When it comes to long-term time, there is a feeling of an all-encompassing, impending threat. Nothing of consequence stands between one’s current state and the realisation of that threat, given that the future promises only more of the same. Hence it seems imminent, an experience that is often conceptualised more specifically in terms of approaching death.

I don’t think anything captures the relevant experience better than the closing scenes of *Macbeth*. I am not suggesting that the character Macbeth himself suffers from depression, but that the world of depression and the situation he finds himself in towards the end of the play are structurally analogous. Macbeth already has a past that takes the form of irrevocable guilt; he can never undo or compensate for his deeds. Then, news of his wife’s death prompts a revelation of the timeless, irrevocable futility of all human life:

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time,
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
> Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5.

Shortly after that, Macbeth's future takes the form of the Birnham Wood creeping up towards Dunsinane. All that remains for him is an imminent threat that surrounds him. Its precise nature is unclear, hidden by the trees, but it promises to end a life that has been stripped of all its possibilities. This is the world of severe, anxious depression – a place bereft of meaningful pursuits, where the future takes the form of inchoate, all-encompassing and imminent menace.

Although I have focused upon changes in what is ordinarily an implicit sense of time, it is important to acknowledge the role of explicit time too. As Fuchs (forthcoming) observes, aspects of temporal experience that are more usually implicit become explicit in depression. So changes in implicit time *are* also changes in explicit time. An obvious comparison is with boredom where, when nothing significant happens to absorb one's attention, one becomes increasingly aware of the passage of time.[21] But, unlike boredom, a loss of all practical significance does not leave one waiting, as there is nothing to wait for. Hence there is something like boredom without reprieve. In so far as the world says 'there can be nothing but this', experience incorporates an explicit appreciation of time, a painful sense of being condemned for eternity. A future that takes the form of dread is equally explicit; it appears as a conspicuous threat, rather than a medium that one obliviously takes for granted while striving to actualise possibilities. And, where there is loss of more localised projects, one can be all too aware of having lost them and of the impact upon the structure on one's life. As for conative drive, it need not simply be absent - its absence can be salient. A sense of action being impossible is also something that one is very much aware of; situations offer something that at the same time presents itself as impossible to actualise.[22]

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[21] See Heidegger (1995) for a detailed phenomenological discussion of boredom. Heidegger's analysis of temporal experience in boredom resembles, in some respects, what I have said about depression, given that boredom is essentially temporal and the absence of certain kinds of possibility from experience characterises its more profound forms.

[22] I suggest that explicit time be subdivided into [i] experience of temporal properties and [ii] narrative time, where the latter involves organising one's experience of time into a coherent, linear pattern of inter-related life events. Fuchs (forthcoming) similarly refers to "personal-historical or biographical time" as something that orders and unifies explicit time.

6. The Past

My emphasis so far has been upon the future. In this section, I will briefly turn to how depression affects experience of the past. I will address the longer-term past, rather than the experience of something as immediately past that Husserl calls "retention" (although I do not wish to rule out the possibility that depression affects the structure of retention too). More specifically, I will describe how a sense of the past as a whole can become phenomenologically conspicuous in depression. First of all, it is important to appreciate that how we experience the future is inextricable from how we experience the past. Consider these remarks by Straus:

> Our views of the past vary with the changes in our state of becoming. Looking backward on a good day we see the past as a territory which we left behind us or as a solid ground which supports us; on a bad day, however, we experience the past as a burden which crushes us. (1947, p.257)

By 'view', he does not mean an explicitly formulated position concerning some subject matter. Rather, he is referring to how we experience the past *through* our orientation towards the future. Which past events seem relevant to us and how those events are significant to us depend upon where we are heading (and vice versa; the dependence is mutual). This is why Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, maintains that there is a sense in which we choose our past:

> …the past as 'that which is to be changed' is indispensable to the choice of the future and […] consequently no free surpassing can be effected except in terms of a past, but we can see too how the very nature of the past comes to the past from the original choice of a future. [….]…all my past is pressing, urgent, imperious, but its meanings and the orders which it gives me I choose by the very project of my end. [….] It is the future which decides whether the past is living or dead. (1989, pp.497-9)

Minkowski (1970, p.193) claims that the difference between a good memory and a guilty one is that the former appears to us as something to be built upon, whereas the latter is experienced as closed, complete, disconnected from where we are going. So, when the future ceases to incorporate any possibility for significant change, one's past

as a whole has the structure of guilt.[23] Fuchs (2003) similarly emphasises how, in melancholic depression, the past takes the form of an all-enveloping and inescapable guilt. However, it is important to note that 'the past as guilt' is not always a central theme in autobiographical accounts of severe depression. Hence it is unlikely that a guilt-ridden past is an inevitable correlate of losing an open future. A different complaint that features in some accounts is that the past seems distant, somehow far away, rather than being something that bears down on one in the form of guilt. For example, Straus (1947, p.255) quotes the following reports: "Everything seems ages ago"; "I can't remember the last morning; yesterday is as remote as events years ago"; "Everything I have done seems like a long time ago; when the evening comes and I think back over the day, it seems years away". Such experiences are just as understandable in terms of a loss of significance. Those past events that are significant to our current situation and to where we are heading are closer to us, more alive, than those that are far removed from our concerns. Without any potential for significant change or any sense of one's future having a teleological direction, all of the past is a settled past, a distant past. Why do some people experience this and others guilt? Perhaps the key difference is the presence of dread or anxiety in guilty depression. A fixed past might appear in the form of guilt or wrong-doing when it is experienced through an all-enveloping sense of threat, especially when that threat takes a personal form.

For many, there is also some erosion of the distinction between past, present and future. Loss of significance can affect experiences of past and future in much the same way. One cannot contemplate things ever being significantly different, at least not in a positive way. This same incomprehensibility applies equally to the past. One cannot recall what it was like to find things significant. It is as though they were not and could not have been any different from how they are now:

> I cannot understand what is happening to me. I have felt this was for so long now, it seems hard to imagine that I ever felt any other way, that I was once a different person, with life and heart and libido. (Lott, 1996, p.229)

[23] See Ratcliffe (2010) for further discussion of depression, guilt and how one remembers the past.

> You cannot remember a time when you felt better, at least not clearly; and you certainly cannot imagine a future time when you will feel better. Being upset, even profoundly upset, is a temporal experience, while depression is atemporal. (Solomon, 2001, p.55)

There is thus a blurring of the difference between past and future, which further contributes to an experience of time as somehow static. If you listen to a dripping drainpipe for half an hour while waiting for a bus, the next few drops are experienced as 'more of the same', rather than as a departure from the past thirty minutes. Although the tap drips, nothing 'happens'; there is change but no significant change. In the absence of any sense that anything could be practically significant, all temporal experience is like this. The future is just more of the past, and does not offer the possibility of any significant deviation. Many people with depression complain of feeling as though they are dead or that they have ceased to exist: "I do not exist any more. When someone speaks to me, I feel as if he were speaking to a dead person. [….] I have the feeling of being an absent person. In sum, I am a walking shadow" (quoted by Minkowski, 1970, p.328); "Time zigzagged sideways. I didn't exist, and so I could take no pleasure in the material world" (Steinke, 2001, p.64). I suggest that such remarks concern - at least in part - a loss of practical significance from the world, and the consequent erosion of an experienced transition between past, present and future. Experience of being in the present consists, in part, of our being able to actualise possibilities, and be affected by things in ways that matter. Without any sense of significant future possibilities, the present would appear structurally similar to the past in certain respects: complete, unchangeable, and closed to activity. An experience of being confronted with the *present as past* is something that one might well be inclined to describe in terms of being dead or a ghost – it feels as though one is not there, that one is surveying something complete, that one has become a disconnected witness to a life that is over.

I have emphasised how the past is experienced when the future is bereft of significant possibilities. However, I suspect that various other modes of past experience are associated with a loss of projects and/or a loss of conative drive. I will conclude this section by briefly describing one of them. In the absence of any preoccupation with future possibilities, a person might increasingly come to re-inhabit past possibilities

instead. Consider *The Rings of Saturn*, W. G. Sebald's semi-autobiographical novel. It begins with the author completing a book project and deciding to take a long and directionless walk through the Suffolk countryside. So, from the outset, there is a peculiar lack of future-oriented drive or projects. As the novel progresses, he becomes absorbed in the significance of past events – the past draws him in. However, as it does so, the experience morphs into something more like the complete loss of significance already described. The past gradually reveals itself as a predictable cycle of misery, horror and tragedy, culminating in a strange feeling of repetition and sameness:

> Scarcely am I in company but it seems as if I had already heard the same opinions expressed by the same people somewhere or other, in the same way, with the same words, turns of phrase and gestures. The physical sensation closest to this feeling of repetition, which sometimes lasts for several minutes and can be quite disconcerting, is that of the peculiar numbness brought on by a heavy loss of blood, often resulting in a temporary inability to think, to speak or to move one's limbs, as though, without being aware of it, one had suffered a stroke. Perhaps there is in this as yet unexplained phenomenon of apparent duplication some kind of anticipation in the end, a venture into the void, a sort of disagreement, which, like a gramophone repeatedly playing the same sequence of notes, has less to do with damage to the machine itself than with an irreparable defect in its programme. Be that as it may, on that August afternoon at Michael's house I felt several times, either through exhaustion or for some other reason, that I was losing the ground from under my feet. (2002, pp.187-8)

In this example, the absence of significant projects, perhaps along with diminished conation, lapses into something more extreme. However, it is – I assume - possible to remain in the intermediate state for longer, to experience the world in a way that is turned more towards the past than the future, where the past is alive with a significance that the future lacks.

7. Time and Illness

I have sketched a range of changes in temporal experience that might be associated with a diagnosis of depression or, more specifically, a major depressive episode. However, I have not insisted that they are exclusive to depression, and some or all might not be. One question to consider is whether different forms of temporal

experience are associated with depression and schizophrenia. We should be cautious about associating distinctive forms of experience with specific diagnostic categories. These categories were formulated - in part - on the basis of phenomenological considerations, but without the aid of detailed, systematic phenomenological study of the relevant phenomena. So there is every reason to suspect that phenomenological enquiry has the potential to challenge established classification schemes, and it should not simply take them as given. Even so, there does seem to be a qualitative difference between the kinds of temporal experience associated with depression and schizophrenia. The former has an impoverished structure, whereas the latter is characterised by structural disruption. Fuchs (forthcoming) emphasises fragmentation in schizophrenia, a breakdown of passive synthesis that erodes an ordinarily taken-for-granted sense of self and world. Vogeley and Kupke (2007, p.162) likewise maintain that schizophrenia involves an "unsystematic disruption", whereas mania and depression involve consistent changes. Drawing this distinction is compatible with the view that the two kinds of change can occur together, that we can have fragmentation accompanied by the consistent loss of certain kinds of possibility, such as that of finding things practically significant. However, some experiences of depression and schizophrenia may have contrasting structures. Sheets-Johnstone (2007) suggests that the experience of schizophrenia is comparable to that of surprise, in that the habitual anticipation ordinarily integral to protention has been lost and so everything appears novel, unexpected. This view is consistent with empirical evidence suggesting that there is a loss of the ability to experience familiar things as familiar (Sass, 2007). If something like this is right, then schizophrenia (in some cases, at least) contrasts markedly with forms of depression that involve complete absence of any sense of significant change and thus inability to find anything surprising.

When we turn to temporal experience in somatic illness, matters are more complicated still. Serious, chronic, somatic illness is often co-morbid with depression.[24] It can thus be difficult to disentangle the two phenomenologically. However, leaving aside co-morbidity, an important difference between somatic illness and those forms of depression that involve loss of practical significance is that,

[24] However, a considerable majority of people with chronic illness do not suffer from depression. See National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (2010) for a detailed discussion of co-morbidity and causal interaction between depression and chronic illness.

although the ill person might stop looking ahead, she retains the capacity to do so. Furthermore, activities such as getting one's affairs in order might remain significant, and the pursuit of a 'good death' could itself become a project. Even so, serious illness surely has a profound effect upon one's sense of the future as a realm of significant projects, and might lead to a loss or abandonment of major life projects that resembles certain other forms of depression. But it is not clear that it has to resemble them. For example, Havi Carel describes a way of learning to "dwell in the present" in response to illness, which seems to differ markedly from depression. It can, she says, be "liberating to live in the now. It is liberating to be freed from having to plan, to make a future, to strategize" (2008, pp.124-5). Even so, the phenomenological boundaries between experiences of somatic illness and those forms of depression that involve loss of conative drive or life projects can be difficult to draw. The emphasis placed by Fuchs upon interpersonal desynchronisation is also something that applies to illness more generally. As Good (1994, p.126) remarks with respect to pain in chronic illness: "Time caves in. Past and present lose their order. Pain slows personal time, while outer time speeds by and is lost". Hence "I feel like the world is passing me by". This feeling of watching the world go by and inhabiting a time that is partially separate from that of others surely amounts to a desynchronisation just as pronounced as that associated with many cases of severe depression. Hence it is questionable whether an emphasis upon desynchronisation identifies anything specific to depression.[25]

We might also wonder about the relationship between the experience of depression and that of ageing. A child's experience of the future surely differs from that of an eighty-year-old. To quote William James:

> How can the moribund old man reason back to himself the romance, the mystery, the imminence of great things with which our old earth tingled for him in the days when he was young and well? (1902, p.151)

Perhaps the structure of depression differs too. Indeed, *some* experiences of ageing may be very similar to a slow descent into depression; future possibilities contract, the

[25] See also Toombs (1990) for some interesting remarks on how chronic, severe pain affects the experience of time.

significance of things diminishes and the past is ever-more complete (Minkowski, 1970, p.310).

8. Conclusion

I have suggested that 'depression' and more specific subcategories of depression such as 'major depression' encompass a range of subtly different changes in the structure of temporal experience. I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive taxonomy here. However, I have offered the beginnings of an interpretive framework for doing so, and explored at least some of the variety. Central to my account is a distinction between loss of practical significance, loss of conative drive and loss of life-projects. I have distinguished the following forms of experience, all of which most likely characterise at least some diagnosed cases of major depression:

> 1. Loss of the sense of things as practically significant for oneself and perhaps for others too, with or without [2] and/or [4].
> 2. Partial or complete loss of conative drive/enticing possibilities, with or without ([1] or [3]) and/or [4].
> 3. Loss of some or all of one's projects (rather than [1] the sense of significance that such projects presuppose), with or without [2] and/or [4].
> 4. A sense of passivity before an impending threat, which can accompany any of [1] to [3] above.[26]

I added that depression can also involve a range of changes in how the past is experienced. Following this, I briefly raised some issues concerning whether and how temporal changes associated with depression might be distinguished from those associated with other conditions.

It is worth stressing that the phenomenology of temporal experience in depression (and the phenomenology of depression more generally) is not merely of intellectual interest. There are also potential therapeutic implications. For instance, greater

[26] Like Fuchs, I also acknowledge that these forms of experience all have an intersubjective aspect, and that feeling disconnected from others is central to the experience of depression. Indeed, almost every first-person account emphasises estrangement from others. As David Karp notes, "an insistent theme raised in every interview centers on human connection. Each person's tale of depression inevitably speaks to questions of isolation, withdrawal, and lack of connection. The pain of depression arises in part because of separation from others; from an inability to connect, even as one desperately yearns for just such connection" (1996, pp.26-27).

sensitivity to subtle differences between forms of temporal experience might enhance the ability to empathise with patients and help relieve feelings of isolation. Furthermore, there may be implications for diagnostic categories. For instance, I have suggested that the category 'major depression' fails to distinguish three different kinds of experience: a loss of practical significance, a loss of drive and a loss of projects. Insofar as such categories are phenomenologically based, this insensitivity demonstrates a need for refinement or revision. Phenomenological work also has the potential to inform both neurobiological studies and pharmaceutical intervention, given the possibility that superficially similar but ultimately very different forms of experience will have different neural correlates and be receptive to different kinds of pharmaceutical intervention.

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