

Polytroposein – Heidegger’s qualified diversitarianism

ἄνθρωπον ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον

A few months before his death Bernard Williams told *The Guardian*, “If there’s one theme in all my work it’s about authenticity and self-expression. It’s the idea that some things are in some real sense really you, or express what you [are] and others aren’t.” His entire philosophical career – “The whole thing” – he said, “has been about spelling out the notion of inner necessity. That someone who has to do something, has to live in a certain way or discovers something is really him, what he belongs to, what is his destiny – I’m drawn to all that.”¹

Yet in his published work Williams scarcely ever mentions Heidegger; a fact all the more remarkable in that Williams’ “notion of inner necessity” and Heidegger’s “call of conscience” are true cognates.²

In his first book Williams spoke of this theme as characteristic of “certain Romantic outlooks,” in which “there may be an appeal to something *there* in human life which has to be discovered, trusted, followed, possibly in grave ignorance of the outcome.” Such outlooks “make an essential connection between submission and uncertainty;” and “rather than offering happiness, demand authenticity.”³

Williams’ mentor Isaiah Berlin labored to explicate (as had so many others⁴) the distinctiveness of the ideology that is Romanticism. In Berlin’s view Johann Gottfried Herder was one of the true fathers of Romanticism, and one of Herder’s central doctrines is ‘expressionism.’ “Herder believed,” Berlin recounts, “that one of the fundamental functions of human being was to express, to speak, and therefore that whatever a man did expressed his full nature; and if it did

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/nov/30/academicexperts.highereducation> .

² At the very close of his Sather Lectures Williams glances sidelong at H.’s fantastic Hellenizing: “One of the most persistent fantasies, at least of the Western world, is that there was a time when things were both more beautiful and less fragmented; the oldest expression of that fantasy indeed is to be found already in the earliest Greek literature, and it embodies both those grounds of nostalgia. But it is always a fantasy, and no serious study of the ancient world should encourage us to go back to that world to search for a lost unity, in our social relations to one another or, come to that, in our relations to Being.” *Shame and Necessity* (1993) 166-167.

³ *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (1972) 78-79.

⁴ See the ‘catalogue of interpreters’ in Arthur O. Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms,” 39 *PMLA* 229 (1924); repr. in Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948).

not express his full nature, it was because he maimed himself, or restrained himself, or had some kind of leash on his energies.”⁵

As Charles Taylor describes it,

“Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human. Each person has his or her own ‘measure’ is his way of putting it. This idea has entered very deep into modern consciousness. ***It is also new.*** [my emphasis] Before the late eighteenth century no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance. There is a certain way of being human that is *my way*. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me.*”⁶

And as Lovejoy had earlier written,

“to the Romantics of the 1790s (following Herder) it appeared that the diversity of men and ages and peoples, in their ways of thinking and feeling and expressing themselves in arts and institutions, is ‘natural’ and necessary, and also supremely desirable and right. And from this pregnant premise they drew two opposite consequences, of which the second was to prevail over the first. The assumption made initially for tolerance and catholicity. All the historic manifestations of human nature are good, and the cultivated man will train himself to appreciate and enjoy them all. But the other inference was that it is the first duty of an individual or a people to cherish and intensify the differentness, idiosyncrasy, *Eigentümlichkeit*, with which nature has endowed him or it.”⁷

Heidegger’s discourse of authentic existence tracks this Romantic pattern. Human being is distinctive for embodying the possibility, and necessity, “of the most radical individuation.”⁸ So

⁵ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (2d ed. Henry Hardy 2013) 66-67.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991) 28-29. In 1968 Paul Anka wrote “My Way” with Frank Sinatra in mind. As of 2005 it was “the most popular contemporary song played at British funerals.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/nov/17/arts.artsnews1> . Perhaps an index of how widely the idea has spread in that aspect of consciousness Heidegger called *das Man*. Cf. “Follow your bliss,” “What’s your passion?” and Randolph Dupree, *7 Different Kinds of Smoke: Living, Loving, and Finding your Inner “-ness”* (2006).

⁷ Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas,” *2 Journal of the History of Ideas* 257, 277 (1941).

⁸ “The transcendence of the being of Da-sein is a distinctive one since in it lies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation.*” *Being and Time* (tr. Joan Stambaugh 1996) 34. *der radikalsten Individuation.*

to the Socratic question 'what way is life to be lived'⁹ Heidegger answers 'authentically'; "the nature of 'the good' is to make authentic existence possible."¹⁰

"And because Da-sein is always essentially its possibility, it *can* [*kann*] 'choose' [»wählen«] itself in its being, it can win itself [*gewinnen*], it can lose itself, or it can never and only 'apparently' win itself. It can only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic [*eigentliches*], that is, it belongs to itself."¹¹

In Heidegger's schema Dasein wins itself by

1. Heeding the call of conscience; and
2. Experiencing the groundlessness of its world; and
3. Choosing its fate.

Heidegger's discussion of the 'appeal' that 'calls' purports to dodge any metaphysical Caller. As Kisiel puts it, "Heidegger will not be trapped into any of the particular versions of his earlier studies of listening and learning, the receptive acceptance of Christian grace [Augustine, Luther], the obediential potency of the 'passive' intellect [Aquinas after Aristotle], the receptivity/spontaneity interface [Kant], and so on."¹²

Instead, for Heidegger "*Da-sein calls itself in conscience. . . . Conscience reveals itself as the call of care: the caller is Da-sein. . . . The call is the call of care.*"¹³

Kisiel makes sense of Heidegger's peculiar assertion this way:

"It is not a person who calls, not even myself. Dasein, the human situation, is not a person. . . . [It is instead] A condition of possibility backed by necessity, a harsh reality that 'obliges' thought, a brute facticity that 'voices' its demands louder than words. . . . Behind the initially immediate facades of complacency, some harsher 'givens' of human immediacy await us individually, to demand our attention, action, and thought. . . . My life *in fact* is not my own from the ground up, and yet it is solely my own as a *can-be*, my own *raison d'être*, mine to own up to and make my own, and that is what I ought to do. I thus owe it to myself to own up to my existence in its entirety, paying due to its can-be which is not yet, at once 'taking into account' and paying heed to that and what I already am and

⁹ ὄντινα τρόπον χρῆ ζῆν. *Republic* 352d.

¹⁰ Thomas Sheehan and Corinne Painter, "Choosing One's Fate: A Re-Reading of *Sein und Zeit* sec. 74," 29 *Research in Phenomenology* 63, 65 (1999). *der Charakter der »Güte« in der Ermöglichung eigentlicher Existenz liegt.*

¹¹ *Being and Time* 40.

¹² Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (1993) 435.

¹³ *Being and Time* 254, 256, 264.

am not, or no longer am. In short, at any given time, I owe a debt to existence, which it itself exacts from me, to which I ought to own up, and not disown.”¹⁴

Kisiel goes on in this vein, concluding with an image all too like the imperious Kantian moral law:

“Owned existence, authentic existence, thus assumes the status of an asymptotic ideal, since I am called upon to become the author of an existence over which I never have absolute authority. Charged by life to take charge of It, yet never discharging that debt, always remaining in deficit to It, an impersonal taskmaster ever exacting its due, over which I can never achieve mastery.”¹⁵

I can never achieve mastery but I can attain a kind of liberation. Section 74 of *Being and Time* is ‘all about’ freedom and power. Death, capital avatar of finitude, is the all-powerful power to which every human being must accede. Then “By anticipating death, openness [human existence] allows [*läßt*] death to grow powerful *within* it [and not merely over it]. But in so doing, openness, as free for death, understands itself in terms of the ‘superior power’ [Kisiel translates ‘superpower’] of its own finite freedom.” This liberated understanding empowers openness “to take over the *powerlessness* of being abandoned to itself.”¹⁶ So empowered, Dasein is free to free up explicitly its inherited possibilities (*das Erbe*) so as to choose from them and ‘become what it is’; to choose its heroes (*Helden*), choose its fate (*Schicksal*).

So goes Heidegger’s variation on a far older thema. “The suggestion,” Frankfurt observes, “that a person may be in some sense liberated through acceding to a power which is not subject to his immediate voluntary control is among the most ancient and persistent themes of our moral and religious tradition. It must surely reflect some quite fundamental structural feature of our lives.”¹⁷ Hence its extraordinary usefulness for organized domination.

For Heidegger *the* fundamental structural feature of our lives is the possibility and **necessity** of self-interpretation. “Self-interpretation belongs to the being of Da-sein.” Da-sein has always already “understood itself, however mythical or magical its interpretations may be.”¹⁸ μῦθόν τινα διηγείσθαι is our characteristic move, how we get by and go on.¹⁹ Heidegger brings out

¹⁴ *The Genesis* 433, 434.

¹⁵ *Id.* 435. The Red Queen’s plight.

¹⁶ “Choosing One’s Fate” 66.

¹⁷ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (1998) 89.

¹⁸ *Being and Time* 288, 289.

¹⁹ Why must we kid ourselves without cease? “*Angst* always already latently determines being-in-the world . . . Da-sein is anxious in the very ground of its being.” *Being and Time* 177. Leszek Kołakowski implicitly identifies the myth-necessitating ‘phenomenon of the world’s indifference’ with *das Nichts* of “What is Metaphysics?” in his *The Presence of Myth* (tr. Adam Czerniawski 1989). To supplement Joan Didion’s saying “We tell ourselves stories in

vividly the fact that we tell ourselves stories – *raisons d'être, Entworfen*, for-the-sake-of-whichs – by enacting them. “Da-sein always already understands itself factually in definite existentiell possibilities, even if its projects arise only from the common sense of the they.”²⁰ Dasein is an obligate *Weltbilder*, ever constructing – fabricating – its niche of meaning.

Williams takes up *Weltbildung* in a different register of terms. He speaks of ‘categorical desire,’ which “settles the question of whether [the person desiring] is going to be alive.”

“Most people have many categorical desires, which do not depend on the assumption of the person’s existence, since they serve to prevent that assumption’s being questioned, or to answer the question if it is raised. Thus one’s pattern of interests, desires and projects not only provide the reason for an interest in what happens within the horizon of one’s future, but also constitute the conditions of there being such a future at all.”²¹

The idea is that “my present projects are the condition of my existence, in the sense that unless I am propelled forward by the conatus of desire, project and interest it is unclear why I should go on at all.” Yet the categorical desires which propel one to go on “do not have to be even very evident to consciousness, let alone grand or large; one good testimony to one’s existence having a point is that the question of its point does not arise, and the propelling concerns may be of a relatively everyday kind such as certainly provide the ground of many sorts of happiness.”²² Absorbed concern in the projects of everyday life just *is* the point of existence for any healthy animal.²³

Sense-making – “existence which discovers or discloses beings or being” – as all else in the lives of organisms, has its range of possibility, as Heidegger says its ensemble of “modes,” its reaction norm. And in the case of sense-making’s reaction norm the range is as wide as they come, the matrix of a great variety of phenotypes (modes), some more frequent than others.²⁴

order to live” – sc. with “the incertitude of the void . . . the apathy of the stars.” (*Ulysses*) ‘Care’ in a universe of indifference must maintain its own micro-environment of meaningfulness to survive, as Nietzsche taught.

²⁰ *Being and Time* 288.

²¹ “Persons, character and morality,” in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (1981) 11.

²² *Id.* 12.

²³ As the Managing Director of Sunshine Desserts might well have put it, “I didn’t get where I am today by asking what’s the point of getting where I am today.” *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin* (BBC 1976-79).

²⁴ “The term reaction norm refers to the set of phenotypes that can be produced by an individual genotype that is exposed to different environmental conditions.” Carl D. Schlichting and Massimo Pigliucci, *Phenotypic Evolution: A Reaction Norm Perspective* (1998) 51. “A norm of reaction is the mapping of environment into phenotype that is characteristic of a particular genetic constitution. So a genotype does not specify a unique outcome of development; rather it specifies a norm of reaction, a pattern of different development outcomes in different environments.” Richard Lewontin, *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism, and Environment* (2000) 23. The set of all

So Heidegger: “The self of everyday Da-sein is the *they-self* which we distinguish from the *authentic self*, the self which has explicitly grasped itself.” For the everyday self the question of its point does not arise; “Da-sein is *dispersed* in the they and must first find itself. . . . Initially, Da-sein is the they and for the most part it remains so [*und zumeist bleibt es so*].” “Not-being-its-self functions as a *positive* possibility of beings which are absorbed in the world, essentially taking care of that world. This *nonbeing* [*Nicht-sein*] must be conceived as the kind of being of Da-sein nearest to it and in which it mostly maintains itself [*in der es sich zumeist hält*].”²⁵ In terms of the population generated within sense-making’s ensemble of reaction norms, the everyday they-self is the most frequently encountered, the positive possibility most often actualized. “Initially, factual Da-sein is in the with-world, discovered in an average way [*in der durchschnittlich entdeckten Mitwelt*].”²⁶

“Yet a man may have,” Williams adds, “for a lot of his life or even just for some part of it, a *ground* project or set of projects which are closely related to his existence and which to a significant degree give a meaning to his life.” The idea is of “a man’s ground projects providing the motive force which propels him into the future, and gives him a reason for living.” Williams remarks that in general a man does not have one separable project which plays this ground role; “rather, there is a nexus of projects, related to his conditions of life, and it would be the loss of all or most of them that would remove meaning.”²⁷

Yet again that a person has distinctive projects, “that he wants these things, finds his life bound up with them, and that they propel him forward,” and thus “give him a reason for living his life” – all this is compatible with “these drives, and this life, being much like others’.” That is his distinctive projects give him “distinctively, a reason for living this life, in the sense that he has no desire to give up and make room for others, but they do not require him to lead a *distinctive* life.”²⁸ As Heidegger puts it, “inauthenticity can determine Da-sein even in its fullest concretion, when it is busy, excited, interested, and capable of pleasure;” “those nearest factual projects are guided by the *lostness* [*Verlorenheit*] in the they of taking care of things.”²⁹ Dispersion in the they is characterized by “heedful absorption [*besorgende Aufgehen*] in the world nearest encountered.”³⁰ And heedfully absorbed dispersion in the everyday world certainly provides the ground of many sorts of happiness, “that quality of life that can flourish

reaction norms of individuals of a population is, so to speak, the reaction norm of the population, its possibility-space which over time expands and contracts.

²⁵ *Being and Time* 121, 164.

²⁶ *Id.* 121.

²⁷ “Persons, character and morality” 12-13.

²⁸ *Id.* 14-15.

²⁹ *Being and Time* 40, 274.

³⁰ *Id.* 121.

only in disregard: a sense of belonging to whatever worlds one lives in, a sense that is both concrete and casual.”³¹

With his notion of a distinctive life – as he says near his death “something really him, his destiny” – Williams converges on Heidegger’s notion of authenticity. The distinctive life and authentic existence are, once again, less frequent phenotypes within sense-making’s norm of reaction.

Authentic existence, as Kisiel interprets it, “assumes the status of an asymptotic ideal.” That metaphor points in specific ways – upward to the celestial dwelling of the Idea of Authenticity, and backward to the eidological thinking which the Romantics and other Counter-Enlighteners had resisted before Darwin was born. Lovejoy summarizes:

“for two centuries the efforts made for improvement and correction in beliefs, in institutions, and in art had been, in the main, controlled by the assumption that, in each phase of his activity, man should conform as nearly as possible to a standard conceived as universal, uncomplicated, immutable, uniform for every rational being. . . . The struggle to realize this supposed purpose of nature, the general attack upon the *differentness* of men and their opinions and valuations and institutions – this, with the resistance to it and the eventual revulsion against it, was the central and dominating fact in the intellectual history of Europe from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century.”³²

So there is a question here: is authenticity bound to Platonic idealism in its avatar of Enlightenment uniformitarianism? Heidegger certainly resists such a bond: “Neither must the entanglement of Da-sein be interpreted as a ‘fall’ from a purer and higher ‘primordial condition.’”³³ A ‘fallen’ creature must ever futilely strive to regain (or mope around pining for) the ideal type from which it has lapsed; Heidegger disavows this interpretation of Dasein’s entangled self.

Kisiel deploys another metaphor to characterize the dynamic of the call and owning up to it, this one pointing away from eidological-essentialist and toward ‘population’ thinking³⁴:

³¹ Leslie H. Farber, “Despair and the Life of Suicide” in *The Ways of the Will: Selected Essays* (exp. ed. 2000) 138.

³² Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1936) 292-293.

³³ *Being and Time* 164.

³⁴ For population thinking variation alone is real, *eidōs* unreal. Gould cites Ernst Mayr for the proposition that population thinking, “as a replacement for Platonic essentialism, forms the centerpiece of Darwin’s revolution.” Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: the Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996) 41. Lovejoy asserts that “The discovery of the intrinsic worth of diversity was . . . one of the greatest discoveries of the human mind.” *The Great Chain of Being* 313. It appears the moral discovery prepared the ground for the revolution.

“As in an evolutionary niche, there is an ineluctable challenge-response ‘logic’ built into the human situation.”³⁵

This image refers us to Heidegger’s critique of Darwinism in the lecture course of winter semester 1929-30 at Freiburg. Based on his reading of Jakob von Uexküll’s work Heidegger there criticizes Darwin’s notion of adaptation, i.e.

“the fundamentally misconceived idea that the animal is present at hand, and then subsequently adapts itself to a world that is present at hand, that it then comports itself accordingly and that the fittest individual gets selected. Yet the task is not simply to identify the specific conditions of life materially speaking, but rather to acquire insight [*Einsicht*] into the *relational structure between the animal and its environment*. . . . The organism is not something independent in its own right which then adapts itself [*päßt sich*]. On the contrary, the organism adapts a particular environment *into* it in each case, so to speak.”³⁶

The population geneticist Richard Lewontin has been preaching this sermon for more than forty years.³⁷ According to Lewontin “if evolution is described as the process of adaptation of organisms to niches” the first difficulty is that “the niches must exist before the species that are to fit them. That is, there must be empty niches waiting to be filled by the evolution of new species.”³⁸ The notion is of present-at-hand ‘holes in the world’ which organisms then fit themselves into – like a key-blank ground and filed to fit the tumblers of a pre-existing lock. Moreover, it is not true “that the life and death and reproduction of an organism are a consequence of the way in which the living being is acted upon by an autonomous [present-at-hand] environment. Natural selection is not a consequence of how well an organism solves a set of fixed problems posed by the environment; on the contrary, the environment and the organism actively codetermine each other.”³⁹ The phenomenon of codetermination is what

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker 1995) 263, 264.

³⁷ See his Lecture 2 of The Tenth Annual Stanislaw Ulam Memorial Lecture Series, Santa Fe Institute (2003): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftzoa2dw3CQ>. Lewontin remarked to David Sloan Wilson in 2015: “I think it is extremely important to go to a fundamental issue, which is organisms create their own environments. All organisms make their niches. The whole notion of ecological niche is a very bad notion. There are no niches without organisms. This notion that there is a hole in the world that the organism evolves to fill [is wrong]. The organism by its evolution changes the conditions of its life and changes what surrounds it. Organisms are always creating their own hole in the world, their own niche. . . . If I could convince people to use that notion of niche, not as a fixed thing, but as something that is manufactured by the organism, I would be very very happy.” Here: <https://evolution-institute.org/the-spandrels-of-san-marco-revisited-an-interview-with-richard-c-lewontin/>.

³⁸ “Adaptation,” 239, No. 3 *Scientific American* 212, 215 (1978).

³⁹ “The Organism as the Subject and Object of Evolution,” in Richard Levins and Richard C. Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist* (1985) 89.

Heidegger identifies as the object of insight into a “relational structure between the animal and its environment [*Beziehungsgefüge des Tieres zu seiner Umgebung*].”

Heidegger goes on to caution us that although we are accustomed to speaking about higher and lower animals “it is nevertheless a fundamental mistake to suppose that amoebae or infusoria are more imperfect or incomplete animals [*unvollkommenere Tiere*] than elephants or apes. Every animal and every species of animal as such is just as perfect and complete as any other [*als solche gleich vollkommen wie die andere*].”⁴⁰ So his discussion of animals as poor in world in contrast to human beings as world-forming “must not be taken as a hierarchical evaluation [*einer abschätzigen Stufenordnung*].”⁴¹ Just as his discussion of the usual state of human beings as inauthentic (‘poor in authenticity’) is not to be taken as a hierarchical evaluation. Inauthenticity, he insists, “does not signify a ‘lesser’ being or a ‘lower’ degree of being.”⁴² The terms inauthentic and non-authentic “by no means signify ‘not really,’ as if *Da-sein* utterly lost its being in this kind of being [inauthenticity].”⁴³ Although “*Da-sein* is always already in irresoluteness [*Unentschlossenheit*],”⁴⁴ nevertheless every human being is as such just as *vollkommen* as any other. ‘Inauthentic’ must not be taken as a sort of maimed condition like that of females in Aristotle’s biology.⁴⁵

Nevertheless Heidegger was still committed to a version of Aristotle’s distinctive-mark-of-man ethics. Williams sketches Aristotle’s account according to which

“there are certain characteristics, in particular, certain activities and powers, which are distinctive of man, and the life of the good man will exemplify to the fullest degree the development of those powers and activities. Or, more accurately, there is one distinctive feature of man – his ability to shape his actions and dispositions by reason – which will be manifested in the *highest* degree; other of his potentialities will, under the ordering power of reason, be realized in a balanced way and not each maximally.”⁴⁶

Plainly the distinctive feature of human existence for Heidegger is the ‘superpower’ of its own finite freedom of self-interpretation, “essentially possible as authentic;” authentic existence here taking the place of the *megalopsuchos* of Aristotle’s system.

⁴⁰ *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 194.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Being and Time* 40.

⁴³ *Id.* 164.

⁴⁴ *Id.* 275.

⁴⁵ “The female is, so to say, a crippled male.” *Generation of Animals* 737a: τὸ γὰρ θῆλυ ὡσπερ ἄρρεν ἐστὶ πεπηρωμένον.

⁴⁶ *Morality* 55.

Neither was Heidegger able entirely to shake off eidological thinking insofar as his notion of authenticity is a version of 'preformationism.' "One of the most important issues in the premodern biology of the eighteenth century," writes Lewontin, "was the struggle between the preformationist and the epigenetic theories of development. The preformationist view was that the adult organism was contained, already formed in miniature, in the sperm and that development was the growth and solidification of this miniature being."⁴⁷

For Heidegger inauthentic Dasein is the result of thwarted development; authentic being-itself is always there as if 'already formed in miniature' yet inchoate, stunted by a toxic environment. "If Da-sein explicitly discovers the world and brings it near, if it discloses its authentic being to itself, this discovering of 'world' and disclosing of Da-sein always comes about by clearing away coverings and obscurities, by breaking up the disguises with which Da-sein cuts itself off from itself."⁴⁸ Otto Pöggeler cites Heidegger's avowal "that his life's work had been to free us from the prison that we carry with us all our lives—from the overwhelming power of the two thousand years since Plato which distort every conversation through the presuppositions engendered by philosophical systems and doctrines, confessional stipulations and religious schisms, and by educational systems."⁴⁹ A Gnostic (*The Matrix*) view of soul or self or being as a pre-formed independent existence in thrall to an alien environment.⁵⁰ This view is in tension with Heidegger's *denial* that the organism is something present at hand, something independent in its own right. Except that for Heidegger there is no such tension because Dasein is not a biological phenomenon. Whereas for the sodality of ontological perverts it is: the triple helix *Erbe/Geworfenheit/Welt* as the human-specific niche-constructing modality of gene/organism/environment.⁵¹

Lewontin notes that before Darwin "the entire history of life on earth was seen as an orderly progression of immanent stages," reflecting a deep commitment to the view that organisms, "both in their individual life histories and in their collective evolutionary history, are determined by internal forces, by an inner program of which the actual living beings are only

⁴⁷ *The Triple Helix* 5.

⁴⁸ *Being and Time* 121.

⁴⁹ "West-East Dialogue: Heidegger and Lao-tzu," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (ed. Graham Parkes 1987) 58.

⁵⁰ Susan Anima Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," 34 *The Journal of Religion* 155 (1954).

⁵¹ In *re das Erbe* E. R. Dodds invokes Gilbert Murray's phrase 'The Inherited Conglomerate' to capture "how the Classical Age inherited a whole series of inconsistent pictures of the 'soul' or 'self'—the living corpse in the grave, the shadowy image in Hades, the perishable breath that is spilt in the air or absorbed in the aether, the daemon that is reborn in other bodies. Though of varying age and derived from different culture-patterns, all these pictures persisted in the background of fifth-century thinking; you could take some of them seriously, or more than one, or even all, since there was no Established Church to assure you that this was true and the other false. On questions like these there was no 'Greek view,' but only a muddle of conflicting answers." *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1966) 179-180. Seen another way this muddle of conflicting answers is a repertoire of variations available for fabricating yet another variant; say, *ich selbst*.

outward manifestations.” We may be inclined to think that this view, and its component preformationism, has been decisively defeated, since “After all, nothing could seem to us more foolish than a picture of the tiny man inside the sperm cell.” Yet, Lewontin points out, “it is really preformationsim that has triumphed, for there is no essential difference, but only one of mechanical details, between the view that the organism is already formed in the fertilized egg and the view that the complete blueprint of the organism and all the information necessary to specify it is contained there, a [wrongheaded] view that dominates modern studies of development.”⁵²

If anything is immanent in organisms it is not *eidos* but variety; authentic Dasein is not an approach to an ideal form but an alternative phenotype resulting from a ‘facultative switch.’ Alternative phenotypes are “Two or more forms of behavior, physiological response, or structure maintained in the same life stage in a single population and not simultaneously expressed in the same individual.” The phenotype itself “includes all aspects of an organism other than the genotype, from the enzyme products of the genes to learned behaviors and the effects of disease.”⁵³ Although the term ‘allophene’ is in use it may be more precise to apply in the case of sense-making organisms a descriptor repurposed from linguistics, ‘alloseme.’

Heidegger’s talk of ‘modification’ suggests that a facultative switch between allosemes is at issue: “*Authentic being one’s self* is not based on an exceptional state [*abgelösten Ausnahmezustand*] of the subject, a state detached from the they, *but is an existentiell*

⁵² *The Triple Helix* 6. Preformationism appears to descend from ‘The Inherited Conglomerate’ through Platonism.

⁵³ Mary Jane West-Eberhard, “Phenotypic Plasticity and the Origins of Diversity,” *20 Ann. Rev. of Ecology and Systematics* 249; 250, 251 (1989). A classic example is the insect *Schistocerca gregaria*, which “exhibits behavioural and morphological phase polyphenism, such that at low population densities, individuals are solitary and relatively benign [from the human point of view], while at high population densities, individuals become gregarious, forming massive swarms that migrate long distances and decimate crops. When environmental conditions favour locust population growth, swarm formation can result from phenotypic changes that are associated with crowding and mediated by physical contact.” N. R. Lovejoy, S. P. Mullen, G.A. Sword, R. F. Chapman and R. G. Harrison, “Ancient trans-Atlantic flight explains locust biogeography; molecular phylogenetics of *Schistocerca*,” *273 Proc. Royal Soc. B: Biological Sciences* 767 (2006). And consider *Cirripedes*, net-footed crustaceans (barnacles) whose penises relative to body length are the longest of all. Both their *cirra* and their penises manifest “reversible plasticity”: “when displaced to other flow regimes . . . they will quickly adjust the length and strength of their arms, even when mature. Thus, cirral nets appear fully reversibly plastic throughout life.” And “what was true for the feeding arms forming the cirral net, would also be true for a penis extending out of the father’s cone: at high water-flow rates, a long penis would be hard to manoeuvre properly.” Building on the research into variable cirral nets, other researchers “indeed found that penises of *Balanus glandula* became shorter and thicker at the base on the more exposed shores. . . . Perhaps not surprisingly, penis length and thickness were also perfectly reversibly plastic,” in keeping with the flow-regime environing the individual. Theunis Piersma and Jan A. van Gils, *The Flexible Phenotype: A Body-Centred Integration of Ecology, Physiology, and Behaviour* (2011) 79-80. Then there is the “widespread but not common (except in a few groups)” phenomenon of true sex change, “where an organism functions during one breeding season or episode as one sex, and as the other sex during another.” David Policansky, “Sex Change in Plants and Animals,” *13 Ann. Rev. Ecol. Syst.* 471; 486, 472 (1982). And so on and on.

modification [Modifikation] of the they as an essential existential.”⁵⁴ Authentic existence “is nothing which hovers over [über schwebt] entangled everydayness, but is existentially only a modified grasp [ein modifiziertes Ergreifen] of everydayness.”⁵⁵

Heidegger sketches the character of facultative switching – or changeover, his term is *Umschlag* – from one alloeme to another in *Being and Time* section 69(b): “The Temporal Meaning of the Way in which Circumspect Taking Care Becomes Modified [Modifikation] into the Theoretical Discovery of Things Objectively Present;” where he aims at “an existential concept of science.” The existential concept “understands science as a mode [Weise] of existence and thus as a mode [Modus] of being-in-the-world which discovers or discloses beings or being.” The “genesis of the theoretical mode of behavior” lies within the situation of Dasein in which “a circumspect taking care changes over into theoretical discovery;” “a modification of our understanding of being [which] amounts to a transformation [Umschlag].”⁵⁶ I.e., from one alloeme to another, an instance of alternative phenotypy.

Heidegger nevertheless persists in eidological, preformationist thinking when he claims there is an “I myself” (*ich selbst*) which is “not for the most part [zumeist] the who [das Wer] of Da-sein, but the they-self [das Man-selbst] is.” “We found that Da-sein is initially and for the most part *not* itself, but lost in the they-self. The they-self is an existentiell modification of the [ontologically prior] authentic self.” Only when this homuncular *ich selbst* retrieves itself from its lostness in the they is the they-self “modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes *authentic* being-one’s-self.” So it is this homunculus (or inner program) which accomplishes the back-modification, and which must first be awakened to its task of freeing itself from entanglement in the they. “But because Da-sein is lost in the ‘they,’ it must first *find* itself. In order to find *itself* at all, it must be ‘shown’ to itself in its possible authenticity.”⁵⁷

West-Eberhard writes that “Escape to a different milieu (via facultative change, or genetic ‘bet hedging’), even with imperfect adaptation, can be more advantageous than improved adaptation to a grossly hopeless or deteriorating situation.”⁵⁸ In the human world one well-documented form of escape to a different milieu is paradigm shift, after the use of that term in Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The faculty which makes possible such an escape

⁵⁴ *Being and Time* 122.

⁵⁵ *Id.* 167.

⁵⁶ *Id.* 327,330,331.

⁵⁷ *Id.* 247, 293, 248.

⁵⁸ Mary Jane West-Eberhard, “Alternative adaptations, speciation, and phylogeny (A Review),” 83 *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 1388, 1389 (1986).

(changeover, *Umschlag*) is the as-structure of insight, 'taking-as-different.' Insight is contagious, communicable, and thereby inducible in the other.⁵⁹

Lovejoy underscores the radicality of large-scale changeover in the case he considers and we began with, Romanticism:

"The Enlightenment was . . . an age devoted, at least in its dominant tendency, to the simplification and the standardization of thought and life – to their standardization by simplification. Spinoza summed it up in a remark reported by one of his early biographers: 'The purpose of Nature is to make men uniform, as children of a common mother.' . . . There have, in the entire history of thought, been few changes in standards of value more profound and more momentous than that which took place when the contrary principle began widely to prevail – when it came to be believed not only that in many, or in all, phases of human life there are diverse excellences, but that diversity itself is of the essence of excellence."⁶⁰

That change, a shift of paradigm, consisted "in the substitution of what may be called diversitarianism for uniformitarianism as the ruling preconception in most of the normative provinces of thought."⁶¹ These two 'isms' as embodied by individuals are allosemes.

How did the alloseme of diversitarianism even arise? In Heidegger's schema, how did the 'modification' happen? Lovejoy cites Schleiermacher's account of how the paradigm shifted for him:

"So there came to me what is now my highest insight. It became clear to me that every man should exemplify humanity in his own way, in a unique mixture of elements, so that humanity may be manifested in *all* ways and everything become actual which in the fullness of infinity can proceed from its womb."⁶²

The faculty for shifting paradigms and the faculty for modifying self-interpretation are the same – insight. Heidegger repeatedly insists on the primacy of insight; in the first instance for the necessary changeover from the 'natural attitude' to phenomenology:

⁵⁹ As Heidegger tells us, "A science does not develop because some scholar discovers something new in a specific situation. Rather, in each case the sudden jolt by which any given science moves forward consists of a revision of basic concepts. From then on, a science develops by taking the heretofore available stock of propositions and concepts and putting them on a new foundation. . . . A thing becomes uncovered for another person; but more than that, a new shared-being with that other person in the world is generated. *This* is what progress in scientific knowledge means, and not the piling up of more and more results." *Logic: The Question of Truth* (tr. Thomas Sheehan 2010) 13, 197.

⁶⁰ *The Great Chain of Being* 292-293.

⁶¹ *Id.* 294.

⁶² *Id.* 310.

“What is important is only whether the existent Dasein, in conformity with its existential possibility, is original enough still to see expressly the world that is always already unveiled with its existence, to verbalize it, and thereby make it expressly visible to others.”⁶³

“In all interpretation of what is essential in every field and area of Dasein, there comes the point at which all knowledge and in particular all learned wisdom [‘normal science’] is of no further assistance. No matter how avidly we scrape together what people before us have said, it is of no avail if we cannot summon the energy for simply seeing what is essential—precisely at the point where it seems there is nothing more to see or to grasp.”⁶⁴

And following on that the *Augenblick* into the Situation in *Angst*. Under pressure of accumulated anomalies, from “the affliction and trouble of concern” (Kisiel) which is *Bekümmern* bringing on the anxious mood of uncanny dissociation – *Angst ist der Befindlichkeit der Unheimlichkeit* – precisely at the point where in “a grossly hopeless or deteriorating situation” one is at a loss, precisely at that threshold some individual organisms have within their reaction norm the capacity for cognitive-affective escape, changeover – of variable duration and frequency of recurrence – to the alternative phenotype that Heidegger calls authenticity.

Lewontin wants to substitute for the metaphor of adaptation the metaphor of construction. Under the latter regime authenticity is not – as Heidegger’s metaphors of revelation would have it – an unconcealment, a disclosing, an uncovering, a finding, etc. of a preformed present-at-hand *ich selbst*; but instead a phenotypic response fabricated out of the reciprocal interaction of the organism and its environment, its own meaning-world; a coping through refiguring of ‘self’-understanding; another *Kunststück des Lebens*, yet one more of life’s devices for keeping the act together and the show on the road (or, if you would, the *Schein* on the *Weg*).

And if phenotypic plasticity may plausibly account for the variety of selves in *Being and Time*, is it not also plausible for seeing, in the later works, metaphysics and ‘the other thinking’ as alloemes, and the various ‘sendings of being’ also as phenomena of the hyperplastic phenotype?

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⁶³ *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (tr. Albert Hofstadter rev. ed. 1988) 171.

⁶⁴ *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 142.