

## Angst and the thick sublime

At the sight of this unwitnessed marvel I thrill  
While a sense of dread unsettles my mind<sup>1</sup>

By Sandra Shapshay's account the sublime is the experience of "being both overwhelmed and exalted, terrified and exhilarated, and humbled and elevated in the presence of certain natural environments and works of art." These features characterize the "common core" shared by a "family of aesthetic responses . . . especially in the European tradition and especially since the eighteenth-century to the present." She offers a theory proposing "a spectrum of sublime responses—ranging from the thin to the thick—that share some core characteristic features."

Edmund Burke's physiological account of the sublime – as "founded on pain," a "delightful horror," a "sort of tranquility tinged with terror" – Shapshay writes,

"understands the sublime as an immediate emotional but not highly intellectual aesthetic response (call this the 'thin sublime'), whereas Kant (and later Schopenhauer's) transcendental accounts understand the sublime as an emotional response in which the cognitive faculties play a significant role (call this the 'thick sublime'). . . . the transcendental explanations of sublime response understand the pain as deriving from a more reflective recognition of human existential or cognitive limitation, and the pleasure from an equally reflective sense of human transcendence of those limitations. . . . whereas 'thin' sublime response . . . consists rather in a bare cognitive appraisal of the object and immediate affective arousal."<sup>2</sup>

Shapshay asks, "What sort of contemporary, metaphysically modest ideas beyond those identified by Kant and Schopenhauer might contribute to the experience of the thick sublime?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*adṛṣṭapūrvam hr̥ṣito 'smi dṛṣṭvā/ bhayena ca pravayathitam mano me. The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata: Text and Translation* (ed. tr. J. A. B. van Buitenen 1981) 33[11].45, p. 119. "I am thrilled, and yet my mind trembles with fear at seeing what has not been seen before." *The Bhagavad-Gīta: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (tr. Barbara Stoler Miller 1986) 'The Eleventh Teaching' line 45, p. 106. "Things never seen before I've seen, and ecstatic is my joy; Yet fear and trembling possess my mind." *The Bhagavad-Gītā* XI § 45, p. 376 in *Hindu Scriptures* (tr. R. C. Zaehner 1966). The adjective *hr̥ṣitah* (thrilled, exhilarated) means literally 'bristling; with hair standing up' (cognate with Latin *hirsutus* and perhaps also *horrere/horribilis*); piloerection as index of animal *Befindlichkeit*.

<sup>2</sup> Sandra Shapshay, "A Theory of Sublime Responses, the Thin and the Thick" in *The Sublime Reader* (ed. Robert R. Clewis 2019). See also Sandra Shapshay, "At once tiny and huge: what is this feeling we call 'sublime'?" December 4, 2018; <https://aeon.co/ideas/at-once-tiny-and-huge-what-is-this-feeling-we-call-sublime>.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Shapshay, "Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics and the Neglect of the Sublime," 53 *British Journal of Aesthetics* 181, 198 (2013).

Insofar as some mode of fear is ingredient in this family of aesthetic responses the lot of them are, in Heidegger's phenomenology, derivative: "All fear finds its ground in dread;" "fear is a derivative phenomenon and is itself grounded in the phenomenon we call dread [**Angst**]." <sup>4</sup> Dread in turn is "nothing but the disposition to uncanniness" <sup>5</sup> – *Angst ist nichts anderes als die Befindlichkeit in der Unheimlichkeit*.

Katherine Withy emphasizes that the analysis of *Angst* in *Being and Time* "plays a methodological role" in that it "solves a very particular problem;" <sup>6</sup> i.e., the problem of access to Heidegger's discovery, world, in its 'worldhood' (*Weltlichkeit*), to world *in se*. "The concept of world," Heidegger tells his students, "or the phenomenon thus designated, is what has hitherto not yet been recognized in philosophy." This central problem "has remained unknown to all previous philosophy." <sup>7</sup> This *adr̥ṣṭapūrvam* went unnoticed by Descartes, <sup>8</sup> nor did Kant see it; <sup>9</sup> Aristotle's near-miss gets honorable mention. <sup>10</sup>

When Arjuna asks Krishna "Let me see the real you" Krishna assents but tells him "You cannot see me with your own eyes; therefore divine eyes I give to you": *divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ*. <sup>11</sup> And as Heidegger tells us, "We can never look upon the phenomenon of world directly." <sup>12</sup> Experience of the worldhood of world must come through another mode, the *Befindlichkeit* of *Angst*, the uncanny eye.

World is "a whole of relations having the character of the in-order-to." <sup>13</sup> "This entity, world, presents itself in the character of 'serving to,' conducive to' or 'detrimental to,' 'relevant to,' and the like." <sup>14</sup>

"The whole of these relations, everything that belongs to the structure of the totality with which the Dasein can in any way give itself something to be understood, to signify to itself its ability to be, we call *significance*

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (tr. Theodore Kisiel 1985) 284. *daß Furcht ein abgeleitetes Phänomenen ist und selbst in dem Phänomenen gründet, das wir als die Angst bezeichnen. . . . alle Furcht gründet in der Angst.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* 291.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Withy, *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* (2015) 49. Our self-understanding is the greater, Heidegger says, "the more primordial is that phenomenon which functions methodologically as a disclosive state-of-mind [*erschließende Befindlichkeit*]. It might be contended that anxiety [*Angst*] performs some such function." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson 1962) 230.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (tr. Albert Hofstadter rev. ed. 1988) 165, 162.

<sup>8</sup> *Being and Time* 131.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* 368.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth* (tr. Thomas Sheehan 2010) 137.

<sup>11</sup> *Bhagavadgītā* 11.8.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker 1995) 298. *Das Weltphänomen können wir nie direkt in den Blick bekommen.*

<sup>13</sup> *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* 262

<sup>14</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 186.

[*Bedeutsamkeit*]. This is the structure of what we call *world in the strictly ontological sense*.”<sup>15</sup>

World has a distinctive orientation; it's 'about' something. The moral to the famous tale of hammering tells us that world is about the possibility of Dasein's being:

“That in which [a being] is involved [*die Bewandtnis hat*] is the 'towards-which' [*das Wozu*] of serviceability, and the 'for-which' [*das Wofür*] of usability. With the 'towards-which' of serviceability there can again be an involvement *with* this thing, for instance, which is ready-to-hand, and which we accordingly call a 'hammer', there is an involvement in hammering; with hammering, there is an involvement in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather; and this protection 'is' for the sake of [*um-willen*] providing shelter for Dasein—that is to say, for the sake of the possibility of Dasein's Being [*um einer Möglichkeit seines Seins willen*].”<sup>16</sup>

The practice of hammering as metonymy for world points to the totality of relationality as for the sake of Dasein, the “sole authentic 'for-the-sake-of-which'”:

“the totality of involvements [*die Bewandtnisganzheit*] itself goes back ultimately to a 'towards-which' [*ein Wozu*] in which there is *no* further involvement . . . This primary 'towards-which' is not just another 'towards-this' as something in which an involvement is possible. The primary 'towards-which' [*das primäre »Wozu«*] is a 'for-the-sake-of-which' [*ein Worum-willen*]. But the 'for-the-sake-of' [*das »Um-willen«*] always pertains to the Being of *Dasein*, for which, in its Being, that very Being is an *issue* [*um dieses Sein selbst geht*]. We have thus indicated the interconnection [*Zusammenhang*] by which the structure of an involvement leads to Dasein's very Being as the sole authentic 'for-the-sake-of-which' [*eigentlichen und einzigen Worum-willen*]. . . .”<sup>17</sup>

World is 'all about *us*.' Various metaphors give us to understand that going about the daily round of concerns (*Alltäglichkeit*) we are absorbed in, engaged with, caught up in, drawn on by this *Bewandtnisganzheit/Bedeutsamkeit* which is world; “propelled forward by the conatus of desire, project and interest”<sup>18</sup> we are “creatures to whom things matter” because “it is a salient characteristic of human beings . . . that we care about what we are.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* 295-296.

<sup>16</sup> *Being and Time* 116.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* 116-117.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Williams, “Persons, character and morality” in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (1981) 12.

<sup>19</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt, “The importance of what we care about” and “Identification and whole-heartedness” in *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (1998) 80, 163. In Wither's terms each of us is a 'case' of that being in whose being its being is an issue for it. *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* 66 et seq.

*Angst* is a decoupling from the ‘mattering;’ a disengagement by which the ‘how-it-is’ of world is disclosed: “*the of-which of dread . . . is the world in its very worldhood.*”<sup>20</sup> When dread befalls us we say “one feels *uncanny* [*unheimlich*]. One no longer feels at home [*nicht mehr zu Hause*] in his most familiar environment, the one closest to him [*der nächstvertrauten Umwelt*] . . . in dread, being-in-the-world is totally transformed into a ‘not at home’ purely and simply [*›Nicht-zu-Hause‹ schlechthin*].”<sup>21</sup> “Everyday familiarity collapses.”<sup>22</sup> “All things and we ourselves sink into indifference.”<sup>23</sup> “The world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance.”<sup>24</sup> Anxiety “reveals the uncanniness of everyday familiar Being-in-the-world.”<sup>25</sup>

The uncanny *Angster* feels the abyss, *Abgrund*, of the nothing, *das Nichts*. “Anxiety makes manifest the nothing.”<sup>26</sup> “Anxiety is anxious in the face of the ‘nothing’ of the world.”<sup>27</sup> *Angst* discloses that human existence means “being held out into the nothing;”<sup>28</sup> a state in which the ordinary present-at-hand can show itself in “an empty mercilessness;”<sup>29</sup> “a being afraid [*Sichfürchten*] which at bottom [*im Grunde*] can no longer be called that.”<sup>30</sup> “One of the essential sites of speechlessness is anxiety in the sense of the horror [*des Schreckens*] to which the abyss of the nothing [*der Abgrund des Nichts*] attunes [*stimmt*] human beings.”<sup>31</sup>

*Angst* is threatening in its disclosure that “The nothing, as other than beings, is the veil of being.”<sup>32</sup> Taken phenomenologically this works out to ‘The meaningless as other than meaningful presence is the veil of meaningfulness.’ Once more through the transducer: ‘The meaningless surrounds the clearing, *die Lichtung* (the open, *das Offene*; etc.) in obscurity.’ Again: ‘The meaningless grounds the clearing groundlessly.’ At last: ‘Meaning proceeds from unmeaning.’

Therein consists our not-at-home-ness. Thus when Nietzsche’s animals gaze at us they see their fellow that has lost its feral bearings: the delusional, laughing, weeping, hapless animal;<sup>33</sup> human existence as ranting vagrant. Nietzsche once more: “Let us beware of saying that death is the

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<sup>20</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 290.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* 289.

<sup>22</sup> *Being and Time* 233. ‘breaks apart’ – *Die alltägliche Vertrautheit bricht in sich zusammen*.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” in *Pathmarks* (ed. William McNeill 1998) 88; *versinken in eine Gleichgültigkeit*.

<sup>24</sup> *Being and Time* 393.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 88. *Die Angst offenbart das Nichts*.

<sup>27</sup> *Being and Time* 393.

<sup>28</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 91. *Da-sein heisst: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*.

<sup>29</sup> *Being and Time* 393.

<sup>30</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 289.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks* 238.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* *Das Nichts als das Andere zum Seienden ist der Schleier des Seins*.

<sup>33</sup> *als das wahnwitzige Thier, als das lachende Thier, als das weinende Thier, als das unglückselige Thier. The Gay Science* (1882/1887), Third Book ¶ 224.

opposite of life. The living is only a type of what is dead – and a very rare one.”<sup>34</sup> Phenomenological transduction: ‘Please don’t say the absurd is the opposite of the meaningful. The meaningful is only a mutation of absurdity – a freak.’ Heidegger accordingly twists the Christian formula *ex nihilo nihil fit* into “*ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*.”<sup>35</sup>

Withy writes, “the ultimate *telos* of human life [is] sense-making. . . . I must be a sense-maker; things must hang together meaningfully.”<sup>36</sup> This teleological characterization has to be read in light of “our growing understanding,” in Bernard Williams’s words, that “the world [sc. the universe, nature] has no metaphysical structure whatsoever.”<sup>37</sup> An understanding which is embodied in the uncanniness of dread. “‘Behind’ the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else.”<sup>38</sup> So Heidegger says of nature, the un-Dasein:

“Nature is what is in principle explainable and to be explained because it is in principle incomprehensible. It is *the incomprehensible pure and simple [das Unverständliche schlechthin]*. And it is the incomprehensible because it is the ‘unworlded’ world, insofar as we take nature in this extreme sense of the entity as it is discovered in physics. . . . all propositions and proofs given in physics or mathematics are certainly comprehensible as propositions, as discourse about something, but that about which they speak is itself the incomprehensible. As the incomprehensible, [nature] is likewise the entity which simply does not have the character of Dasein at all, while Dasein is the entity which is comprehensible in principle. Since understanding belongs to its being as being-in-the-world, world is comprehensible to Dasein insofar as it is encountered in the character of meaningfulness [*Bedeutsamkeit*].”<sup>39</sup>

In *Being and Time* he makes the point again through the concept of truth:

“Newton’s laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth [*jede Wahrheit*] whatever—these are true only as long as Dasein *is*. Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth [*keine Wahrheit*]; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more.

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<sup>34</sup> *Hüten wir uns, zu sagen, dass Tod dem Leben entgegengesetzt sei. Das Lebende ist nur eine Art des Todten, und eine sehr seltene Art. Id.*, Third Book ¶ 109.

<sup>35</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 95.

<sup>36</sup> *Heidegger on Being Uncanny* 67. “Because existence, in its very being, is sense-making, it lives in meanings and can express itself in and as meanings.” *Logic: The Question of Truth* 127. This is our, not **the** *telos*, for “even a vegetable lives its none-too-bright life in terms of an end-for-which [sc. more vegetables?].” *Id.* 129.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Williams, “Introduction to *The Gay Science*” in *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy* (ed. Myles Burnyeat 2006) 316.

<sup>38</sup> *Being and Time* 60.

<sup>39</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 217-218. “there’s a lot of ‘because’ out there, but there isn’t any ‘for.’” Jerry Fodor, “Peacocking” (review of Richard Dawkins, *Climbing Mount Improbable*) 18 *London Review of Books* 19-20 (1996); <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v18/n08/jerry-fodor/peacocking> .

For in such a case truth as disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*], uncovering [*Entdeckung*], and uncoveredness [*Entdecktheit*], cannot be.”<sup>40</sup>

Shapshay remarks that “the paradigmatic phenomenology of the sublime involves a feeling of humility but also a feeling of *exaltation* of the self.”<sup>41</sup> In Heidegger’s account this exaltation – “the ultimate grandeur of Dasein”<sup>42</sup> – in the experience of *Angst* comes from the prospect of freedom: “It is the *liberation of the Dasein in man* that is at issue here.”<sup>43</sup> For “Without the original manifestness of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom.”<sup>44</sup> In the “possibility of that power which is distinctive for the mood of anxiety . . . Dasein is taken all the way back to its naked uncanniness, and becomes fascinated [*benommen*] by it. [“In anxiety there occurs . . . a kind of entranced calm (*eine gebannte Ruhe*).”<sup>45</sup>] This fascination, however, not only *takes* Dasein back from its ‘worldly’ possibilities, but at the same time *gives* it the possibility of an *authentic* potentiality-for-Being [*eines eigentlichen Seinkönnens*].”<sup>46</sup>

“Anxiety discloses an insignificance of the world [*Unbedeutsamkeit der Welt*]; and insignificance reveals the nullity of that with which one can concern oneself [*Nichtigkeit des Besorgbaren*] . . . [This revelation], however, signifies that one is letting the possibility of an authentic potentiality-for-Being be lit up.”<sup>47</sup> “Anxiety liberates [the opened-up one] *from* possibilities which ‘count for nothing’ [*»nichtigen«*], and lets him become free *for* those which are authentic.”<sup>48</sup>

And this prospect of freedom is elating:

“Along with the sober anxiety [*nüchternen Angst*] which brings us face to face with our individualized potentiality-for-Being [*vereinzelte Seinkönnen*], there goes an unshakable joy [*gerüstete Freude*] in this possibility.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Being and Time* 269. And Nietzsche: once humanity goes extinct “it will have been as if nothing had happened.” *wird sich nichts begeben haben. On Truth and Lie in a Non-moral Sense* (1873) ¶ 1. Cf. Krishna, in phenomenological idiom, to the distraught Arjuna: “Beings [*bhūtāni*] are undisclosed in their beginning [*avyaktādīni*], disclosed in their presence [*vyaktamadyāni*; ‘*madhyāni*’ lit. ‘middle’], undisclosed in their end [*avyaktanidhanāny*]. Why the fuss?” *Bhagavadgītā* 2.28.

<sup>41</sup> “A Theory of Sublime Responses.”

<sup>42</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 93. *die letzte Größe des Daseins*.

<sup>43</sup> *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 172. *die Befreiung des Daseins im Menschen*.

<sup>44</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 91. *Ohne ursprüngliche Offenbarkeit des Nichts kein Selbstsein und keine Freiheit*.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* 90.

<sup>46</sup> *Being and Time* 394.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* 393-394.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* 395.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* 358. Cannot suppress entirely the Nietzschean suspicion that this blue-sky prospectus is itself a ‘physiological’ immune response; one of life’s devices for coping with the Gorgon. “We have art lest we perish of the truth;” not least our manic play-acting before “the glorifying mirror.” See “The Dionysian Worldview” (tr. Claudia Crawford) 13 *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 81, 85 (1997).

Taken together the foregoing passages depict the experience of uncanny *Angst* as one of, in Shapshay's terms, "being both overwhelmed and exalted, terrified and exhilarated, and humbled and elevated." Furthermore it is a transcendent experience; or rather it discloses sense-making as itself transcendent: "Being held out into the nothing – as Dasein is – on the ground of concealed anxiety is its surpassing of beings as a whole. It is transcendence."<sup>50</sup>

Shapshay insists on the *aesthetic* nature of the sublime – that perception of some object or environment triggers the response. Then what object or entity is it, natural or artificial, in the presence of which or in response to which *Angst* can arise?

In Heidegger's phenomenology it's the other way around. *Angst* reveals the condition of the possibility of taking anything as anything at all; of any response, sublime or other. "For human Dasein, the nothing makes possible the manifestness of beings as such."<sup>51</sup>

"Human Dasein can comport itself [*sich verhalten*] toward beings only if it holds itself out into the nothing [*sich in das Nichts hineinhält*]. Going beyond beings occurs in the essence of Dasein. But this going beyond is metaphysics itself. This implies that metaphysics belongs to the 'nature of the human being.' It is neither a division of academic philosophy nor a field of arbitrary notions. Metaphysics is the fundamental occurrence in our Dasein. It is that Dasein itself."<sup>52</sup>

This conception fulfills Shapshay's desideratum of "metaphysically modest" because it takes the metaphysical to be not some pre-existent, stand-alone, Eternal Order but instead a phenomenon of finitude. "Of course, only as long as Dasein is . . . 'is there' Being." "Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth" – no metaphysics, either – "nor will there be any after Dasein is no more."<sup>53</sup>

"[T]he essence of dread is Dasein itself."<sup>54</sup> Dasein appears twice in the phenomenon of dread,<sup>55</sup> as the dreader and as that which is dreaded; in anti-Heideggerian terms Dasein is both the subject and the object of dread. As the dreader Dasein is 'tiny,' the null basis of a nullity;<sup>56</sup> an infinitesimal which dreads the 'huge': "the nothing, the pervasive expanse [*die Weiträumigkeit*] of that which

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<sup>50</sup> "What is Metaphysics?" 93. *das Übersteigen des Seienden im Ganzen: die Transzendenz*.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* 91. *Das Nichts ist die Ermöglichung der Offenbarkeit des Seienden als eines solchen für das menschliche Dasein*.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* 96.

<sup>53</sup> *Being and Time* 62, 255.

<sup>54</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 293.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* 293. Cf. "That of which dread is in dread is the *in-which of being-in-the-world*, and that about which one is in dread is this very same *being-in-the-world*, specifically in its primary discoveredness of 'not-at-home' [*in seiner primären Entdecktheit des ›Unzuhause‹*]. . . . More precisely stated, in dread . . . *Dasein is the of-which and the about-which.*" *Id.* 290.

<sup>56</sup> *Being and Time* 331.

gives every being its warrant to be," "being itself," "the abyss of freedom [*Abgrund der Freiheit*]." <sup>57</sup>

"Dread is not a mode of fear. Rather, it is the other way around: *All fear finds its ground in dread.*" <sup>58</sup> Moreover, "That kind of Being-in-the-world which is tranquilized and familiar [everydayhood] is a mode of Dasein's uncanniness, not the reverse. *From an existential-ontological point of view, the 'not-at-home' must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon.*" <sup>59</sup> So also the sublime response finds its ground in anxiety as the uncanniness of being in nothing, as sense-making adrift in the sea of the senseless.

Shapshay argues for a range, a "spectrum" of sublime responses. The sublime consists, she writes, in a person's "affective and cognitive response to perceptual experience of an object like a work of art or, more paradigmatically, an environment." <sup>60</sup> The increasing ratio of cognitive to affective forms a gradient:

"While the 'thin' sublime accounts for the pain as resulting from a perceived threat to the organism and the pleasure as a physiologically generated sense of relief; the transcendental explanations of sublime response understand the pain as deriving from a more reflective recognition of human existential or cognitive limitation, and the pleasure from an equally reflective sense of human transcendence of those limitations. Thus, 'thick' sublime response involves a reflection on the complexities of the relationship between human beings and the world in which we find ourselves, whereas 'thin' sublime response does not, and consists rather in a bare cognitive appraisal of the object and immediate affective arousal." <sup>61</sup>

This gradient is an artefact of history. "I believe," Shapshay writes, "sublime responses are highly *historical and cultural*, unlike, say, the response of disgust [and piloerection?] . . . I believe the concept of 'the sublime' as well as sublime responses themselves have an origin and a history that is intertwined with the self-understanding of human beings especially as concerns their relationship with nature." <sup>62</sup>

How account for this gradient with Heidegger's phenomenology? Shapshay tells us the sublime response has affective and cognitive components. Interpreting Aristotle Heidegger says "The 'soul' which makes up the Being of man has  $\alpha\iota\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and  $\nu\acute{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  among its ways of Being, and in

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<sup>57</sup> "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?'" 233, 236.

<sup>58</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 284. He goes so far as to claim that although "delusions of dread" "can be induced purely physiologically" "this physiological possibility itself exists only because this entity, which is corporeally determined, can by virtue of its being be in dread at all, and not because some physiological occurrence could produce something like dread." *Id.* 290.

<sup>59</sup> *Being and Time* 234.

<sup>60</sup> "A Theory of Sublime Responses, the Thin and the Thick."

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*



these it discovers all entities.”<sup>63</sup> So the existential constitution of the ‘Da’<sup>64</sup> – the phenomenon of *Entdecktheit*,<sup>65</sup> ‘discoveredness’ – has two principal components (if that phrase be permitted) – *Befindlichkeit* (‘disposedness,’ ‘state-of-mind’) and *Verstehen* (‘understanding’); roughly, the basis of affectivity and the basis of cognition. These two existentials are equiprimordial<sup>66</sup> and co-occurrent: state-of-mind is never without understanding and understanding always has its mood.<sup>67</sup>

Although in *Dasein* these two existentials are inseparable their genealogies are another matter. In his first extended discussion of *Befindlichkeit* Heidegger claims that any living organism has some measure of disposedness:

“A stone never finds itself [*sich befinden*] but is simply on hand. A very primitive unicellular form of life, on the contrary, will already find itself, where this disposition [*diese Befindlichkeit*] can be the greatest and darkest dullness [*Dumpfheit*], but for all that it is in its structure of being [*Seinsstruktur*] essentially distinct from merely being on hand like a thing.”<sup>68</sup>

Understanding, by contrast, marks the specific difference between human being and other organisms. The core of understanding is the ‘as-structure’ (*die Als-Struktur*). “The ‘as’ is the basic structure whereby we understand and have access to anything;” “a structure of *λόγος* that first makes *λόγος* as such possible.” “The ‘as’ has the function of uncovering something in terms of something, of uncovering something *as*—i.e., as this or that. The ‘as’ is the structure of understanding.”<sup>69</sup>

“[Human] Existence is, in itself and by its very nature, world-open, open for the world; and corresponding to that, the world is dis-closed, opened-up. . . . Every act of having things before our eyes, every act of perceiving them, is held within this disclosure of those things, a disclosure that things get from a primary making-sense-of-things in terms of their what-they’re-for. Every act of having something before our eyes and perceiving it, is in and of itself a matter of ‘having’ something *as* something. Our directional being-onto-things-and-people functions within this structure of ‘something as something.’ In short, it has the *as-structure*.”<sup>70</sup>

According to Heidegger non-human organisms simply do not have the as-structure:

“The manifestness of beings as such, of beings *as* beings, belongs to world. This implies that bound up with world is this enigmatic ‘as’, beings *as* such, or formulated in a formal way: ‘something *as* something’, a possibility which is quite

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<sup>63</sup> *Being and Time* 34.

<sup>64</sup> *Being and Time* V.A.

<sup>65</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* §28.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* 172.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* 385.

<sup>68</sup> *History of the Concept of Time* 255.

<sup>69</sup> *Logic: The Question of Truth* 129, 120, 127.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* 121.

fundamentally closed to the animal. . . . Nothing of this kind is to be found in animality or in life in general.”<sup>71</sup>

*Angst* is a *Grundbefindlichkeit*, a fundamental disposition of Dasein.<sup>72</sup> The originary anxiety (*die ursprüngliche Angst*) in human existence “is usually repressed. Anxiety is there. It is only sleeping. Its breath quivers perpetually through Dasein.”<sup>73</sup> Yet,

“Originary anxiety can awaken in Dasein at any moment. It needs no unusual event to arouse it. Its sway is as thoroughgoing as its possible occasionings are trivial. It is always ready, though it only seldom springs, and we are snatched away and left hanging.”<sup>74</sup>

By contrast the sublime response always needs a prompt from the natural world or some artefact. Shapshay comments that, additionally, the thick sublime “involves facts known or believed about objects as well as facts known or believed about the subject(s) of aesthetic contemplation, for this kind of sublime experience has to do centrally with *the relationship* between the subject and the overwhelming object or environment.”<sup>75</sup>

One possible conjecture then, with a concluding bow to the *Gītā*, is that the thick sublime response, insofar as it partakes in our being’s being an issue for itself, insofar as it takes a case of Dasein as something-in-relation-to the overwhelming object or environment, is ontologically disclosive, an *avatārah* of *Angst*, of the constitutive uncanniness of human existence.

DCW 1/17/2019

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<sup>71</sup> *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 274.

<sup>72</sup> *Being and Time* § 40, *passim*.

<sup>73</sup> “What is Metaphysics?” 93.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> “A Theory of Sublime Responses, the Thin and the Thick.”