Another *Kunststück des Lebens—nackte Geworfenheit*

Katherine Withy suggests that although Heidegger's discourse of thrownness "covers a variety of kinds of finitude," the finitude he is primarily seeking to capture is that "making sense of things *is* in a way and on a ground that is ultimately opaque to it. To be thrown is not first of all to be in a world and amidst things, but to be necessarily self-obscure."[1] As if 'Sense-making can make sense of all and only those that cannot make sense of themselves.'[2]

At the beginning of her paper Withy nods to Kant by remarking that "there are limitations on what we can know or understand—as Kant knew well." At the end of Part I of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant famously proclaims what one such limitation gains for us—the freedom to strive for the highest good, *zum höchsten Gute zu streben.* Now if it is our nature so to strive then surely we must have the requisite cognitive ability, *Erkenntnißvermögen . . . zu diesem Zwecke schicklich angenommen werden*. Well we have some, though not enough; such that "Nature then seems here to have provided for us only in a stepmotherly fashion with the faculty needed for our end." But this is just how we should want it to be, Kant claims.[3] For put the case that we did possess "that capacity for [perfect] insight or that [complete] enlightenment," then

> "instead of the conflict that the moral disposition now has to carry on with the inclinations, in which, though after some defeats, moral strength [*Stärke*] of soul is to be gradually acquired, *God and eternity with their awful majesty* would stand unceasingly before our eyes . . . Transgression of the law would, no doubt, be avoided: what is commanded would be done; but because the *disposition* from which actions ought to be done cannot be instilled by any command, and because the spur to activity [*der Stachel der Thätigkeit*] in this case would be promptly at hand and *external*, reason would have no need to work itself up [*sich nicht allererst empor arbeiten darf*] so as to gather strength to resist the inclinations [*um Kraft zum Widerstande gegen Neigungen*] by a lively representation of the dignity of the [moral] law: hence most actions conforming to the law would be done from fear, only a few from hope, and none at all from duty, and the moral worth of actions, on which alone in the eyes of supreme wisdom the worth of the person and even that of the world depends, would not exist at all."

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[1] Katherine Withy, "Situation and Limitation: Making Sense of Heidegger on Thrownness," 22 *European Journal of Philosophy* 61, 80 (2011).

[2] Those what? Everything and anything: entities, processes, non-existent objects, whatever. Can sense-making make sense of itself? If it can, then it cannot. If it cannot, then it can.

[3] "the idea is to take this very situation and, instead of regretting it or bemoaning it, to say that it is exactly what we should desire! To say that it would, in fact, be bad if there were a revealed human *ergon* or revealed nature of Eudaemonia." Hilary Putnam, *The Many Faces of Realism* (1987) 49.

In short, Kant says, we would be puppets. Praise be, then, that it is quite otherwise with us, "when with all the effort of our reason we have only a very obscure and ambiguous view into the future; when the governor of the world allows us only to conjecture his existence and his grandeur, not to behold them or prove them clearly." So that "the inscrutable wisdom by which we exist is not less worthy of veneration in what it has denied us than in what it has granted us."[4] In other words, for moral strength of soul to manifest itself through struggle the very ground of the moral law must remain unmanifest.

Borrowing the title of Hirschman's essay we may label the genus of such enabling concealments 'The Hiding Hand.' Hirschman wrote, "since we necessarily underestimate our creativity it is desirable that we underestimate to a roughly similar extent the difficulties of the tasks we face, so as to be tricked by these two offsetting underestimates into undertaking tasks which we can, but otherwise would not dare, tackle. The principle is important enough to deserve a name: since we are apparently on the trail here of some sort of Invisible or Hidden Hand that beneficially hides difficulties from us, I propose 'The Hiding Hand.'"[5]

In Flyvbjerg and Sunstein's critique there are in fact two Hands, the Benevolent and the Malevolent. These authors recall that "the core mechanism of Hirschman's principle of the Benevolent Hiding Hand is that people are tricked by their ignorance of difficulties and costs into starting projects, but once the projects have been started, people find similarly underestimated sources of creativity to overcome and more than compensate for the initial difficulties and costs, making their projects succeed."[6] Hirschman analyzed 11 economic development projects and saw only the beneficial concealment of difficulties and, when the difficulties manifested themselves, a consequent unconcealment of creativity, whereas Flyvbjerg and Sunstein analyze 2,062 such projects and find this Benevolent Hand in only 22% of cases. In the rest the Malevolent Hand is at work, the Hand "which also hides obstacles and difficulties, but in situations in which creativity does not emerge, or emerges too late, or cannot possibly save the day. One of the fiendish acts of the Malevolent Hiding Hand is that it hides not only the initial obstacles and difficulties, but also the barriers to creativity itself."[7] Of this 78% of the surveyed cases might then we say that *die Gefahr* is there, hidden, but *das Rettende* does

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[4] *Critique of Practical Reason* (tr. Mary Gregor 1997) 121-122. Kant's *Werke Band* V: 146-148: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/49543/49543-h/49543-h.htm#Pg146 .

[5] Albert O. Hirschman, "The Principle of the Hiding Hand," 13 *The Public Interest* 10, 13 (1967): https://www.nationalaffairs.com/public_interest/detail/the-principle-of-the-hiding-hand .

[6] https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1509/1509.01526.pdf at 6.

[7] *Id.* 4. The Malevolent Hiding Hand shows up for Thucydides as 'hope,' which is "almost invariably deluding and its power is overwhelmingly destructive." Raymond Geuss, "Thucydides, Nietzsche, and Williams" in *Outside Ethics* (2005) 224, citing the *History* III.45.5: ἥ τε ἐλπὶς καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐπὶ παντί, ὁ μὲν ἡγούμενος, ἡ δ᾽ ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν ἐκφροντίζων, ἡ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα, πλεῖστα βλάπτουσι, καὶ ὄντα ἀφανῆ κρείσσω ἐστὶ τῶν ὁρωμένων δεινῶν.

not grow even when the danger becomes evident? Flyvbjerg and Sunstein have shown that the Hiding Hand **always** hides trouble and that most of the time this works to the detriment of the aimed-for success of the project; cost overruns and negative externalities swamp any benefits achieved.

In **all** the cases the impetus to undertake the project is a given, and in **all** the cases the Hand hides the obstacles. Should we not then infer that the Hand is neither benevolent nor malevolent? As a mere mechanism it has no preview into the likelihood of a project's outcome. The Hand is no fiendish deceiver. Its interest, so to speak, is simply that projects get undertaken and go forward. The Hiding Hand (mechanism of concealment) as limitation enables exploratory overproduction of variants (all the projects themselves and any concomitant innovations). Perhaps overproduction of variants **is** the saving power;[8] yet a weak one, effective only sporadically.

One species of enabling concealments is characterized by the term 'noise.' "In my model of the way we observe the world," wrote Fischer Black, "noise is what makes our observations imperfect. It keeps us from knowing the expected return on a stock or portfolio. It keeps us from knowing whether monetary policy affects inflation or unemployment. It keeps us from knowing what, if anything, we can do to make things better." In such a model "research will be seen as a process leading to reliable and relevant conclusions only very rarely, because of the noise that creeps in at every step." We might conjecture that the Hiding Hand is needed to conceal this likely futility just in order to get research undertaken at all. As to its enabling power, noise "makes financial markets possible." For "The whole structure of financial markets depends on relatively liquid markets in the shares of individual firms. Noise trading provides the essential missing ingredient. Noise trading is trading on noise as if it were information." Consequently, "The more noise trading there is, the more liquid the markets will be, in the sense of having frequent trades that allow us to observe prices. But noise trading actually puts noise into the prices. The price of a stock reflects both the information that information traders trade on and the noise that noise traders trade on. As the amount of noise trading increases, it will become more profitable for people to trade on information, but only because the prices have more noise in them. The increase in the amount of information trading does not mean that prices are more efficient. Not only will more information traders come in, but existing information traders will take bigger positions and will spend more on information. Yet prices will be less efficient. What's needed [i.e., the obscurity that is noise] for a liquid market causes

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[8] Certain mechanisms "involving an initial overproduction of variants or paths, followed by selection of those that work, share the quality of extreme flexibility in ability to adjust to unpredictably varied situations." Mary Jane West-Eberhard, *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution* (2003) 43.

prices to be less efficient."[9] The governor of the world has created noise traders to supply the markets with liquidity, but even the providence of such inscrutable wisdom injects inefficiency into the system. Perhaps efficiency is not the point.

Dasein's constitutive kinesis is *Aussein auf etwas.*[10] And Dasein is its own 'development project' in the sense that "Dasein is an entity for which in its being, in its being-in-the-world, 'it goes about its very being,' for which, that is, its very being is at issue."[11] Dasein's fundamental authentic project—*zum höchsten Gute zu streben*—is to make sense of its very sense-making. Yet ultimately, per Withy, there is no such sense to be made. Withy interprets Heidegger's discourse of the *Woher* and *Wohin* of *Geworfenheit* to mean that "saying that the whence of thrownness is obscure (that we cannot make sense of it) is the same as saying that the whence is empty (that there is no sense to be made of it)." And "The whither of thrownness is also obscure in this way. . . . The obscurity here is once again a reflexive finitude in sense-making, a finitude in our self-finding. Like the obscurity of the whence, it is constitutive for sense-making." In other words, "it belongs to us that we can attempt to make sense of our situation beyond the point at which the sense to be made of it runs out. When we encounter this limit in sense-making, we encounter unintelligibility. We find the whence and/or the whither as obscure."[12]

The aggregate of determinative constraints named by 'situatedness' is the aspect of thrownness most salient to us, whereas "pure thrownness," Withy says, "is the fact that we are entities that *encounter* (particular) things, *lead* (particular) lives, and *have* (particular) cultures, *at all*. I am the kind of entity that makes sense of *particular* things in *particular* ways (situatedness) only because I am first the kind of entity that *makes sense* of things (pure thrownness). . . . Pure thrownness is more fundamental, or deeper, than our situatedness."[13]

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[9] Fischer Black, "Noise," 41 *The Journal of Finance* 529, 531, 532 (1986): https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1540-6261.1986.tb04513.x .

[10] *In der Struktur des >Auf-etwas-aus-sein<, was ich noch nicht habe, aber Aussein in einem Schon-sein-bei, das eo ipso Aussein auf etwas ist, kommt das Phänomen des Noch-nicht-habens von etwas, worauf ich aus bin, zum Vorschein. Dieses Phänomen des Noch-nicht-habens von etwas, als auf welches ich aus bin, bezeichnen wir als das Darben oder die Darbung. Es ist nicht einfach ein schlechthinniges, bloßes objektives Nicht-haben, sondern es ist immer ein Nicht-haben von etwas, worauf ich aus bin, und erst dadurch ist die Darbung, das Entbehren, das Bedürfen, konstituiert. Diese Grundstruktur der Sorge wird nachher bei der weitergehenden Interpretation sich auf die Seinsverfassung zurückleiten lassen, die wir dann als die Zeit verstehen lernen werden.* Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe Band* 20: 408-409: https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=20.00&pg=408 .

[11] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (tr. Theodore Kisiel 1985) 292. *Das Dasein ist Seiendes, dem es in seinem Sein, in seinem In-der-Welt-sein, **um sein Sein selbst geht**.* GA 20: 405. https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=20.00&pg=405 .

[12] "Situation and Limitation" 70, 71.

[13] *Id.* 74.

"So to say that the whence and whither of pure thrownness are obscure is to say that the reflexive questions of the essence and transcendental ground of sense-making are ones which human beings are constitutionally bound to ask, but also ones which we necessarily cannot answer. It must be part of being a sense-maker that we are unable to make sense of what it is, and what it takes, to be a sense-maker. This, of course, in some ultimate sense—there is still much that we can say on this topic, as Heidegger does in his own transcendental philosophizing. But the claim is that, as with identifying the whence and whither of situatedness, we will eventually reach a point beyond which there is nothing more or new to say, and that we will not have thereby reached any final ground or original condition of possibility. We will be left facing the ultimate unintelligibility of sense-making to itself."[14]

That is, the reflexive questions ultimately confront noise. This aporia is the Hiding Hand as an enabling limit, a barrier which deconstrains Dasein's "uncommonly good ability to find a signal even in total noise."[15] The Hand enables exploratory overproduction of variants as interpretations of, signal-finding in, ontological noise. *Um-sein-Sein-selbst-gehen* is the enacted, variagenic hermeneutics of pure noise; *Existenz* is noise-trading. In Lonergan's terms, conceptual formulation of this inverse insight—that ontological noise is Dasein's core—affirms empirical elements—the myriad variant answers to *Was ist der Mensch?*[16]—only to **deny** an expected intelligibility—the ultimate intelligibility of sense-making to itself.

Variation is the primary phenomenon. As Pippin has recently documented once more, Heidegger was not after a logically, discursively adequate but a radically **variant** thinking of being.[17] The ontological noise of *Existenz* is thus vital to Heidegger's project; its obscurity

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[14] *Id.* 79. And this will be an inverse insight. "Besides direct insights, their clustering, and higher viewpoints, there exists the small but significant class of inverse insights. As direct, so also inverse insights presuppose a positive object that is presented by sense or represented by imagination. But while direct insight meets the spontaneous effort of intelligence to understand, inverse insight responds to a more subtle and critical attitude that distinguishes different degrees or levels or kinds of intelligibility. While direct insight grasps the point, or sees the solution, or comes to know the reason, inverse insight apprehends in some fashion that the point is that there is no point, or that the solution is to deny a solution, or that the reason is that the rationality of the real admits distinctions and qualifications. Finally, while the conceptual formulation of direct insight affirms a positive intelligibility though it may deny expected empirical elements, the conceptual formulation of an inverse insight affirms empirical elements only to deny an expected intelligibility." *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Vol.3; *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* [1957] (ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran 1992) 43-44.

[15] Baruch Fischhoff, "For those condemned to study the past: Heuristics and biases in hindsight," in *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases* (ed. Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, Amos Tversky 1982) 347.

[16] GA 29/30: 10. https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=29.30&pg=10 . Of course, the interpretation of *Existenz* as a system of exploratory overproduction of variants is itself a variant signal 'detected' in the ontological noise. Pickle.

[17] Pippin writes that emphasis on the priority of disclosure "is also put another way by Heidegger: that in order to remain true to the original manifestation of the meaning of being, we need to reconceive philosophical thinking as something other than discursive rationality." Robert B. Pippin, *The Culmination: Heidegger, German Idealism, and the Fate of Philosophy* (2024) 188.

enables variation in response; it's the preeminent disclosive breakdown. In a chapter entitled 'Poetic Thinking?' Pippin writes,

> "Paradoxically, Heidegger makes clear in [*Wozu Dichter?*] that he does not mean that the task of poetry is to render the unsaid sayable; it is precisely to disclose such meaning *in* its unsayability, obviously a difficult and paradoxical notion. . . . A good deal of Heidegger's commentary is like this, an explication of something evoked that cannot be named; something disclosed but with no determinate content, a revelation with nothing revealed (no determinare content but not mere absence); rather an evocation of absence with density of possible inflections and implications that it defies critical paraphrase."[18]

So what is Heidegger driving at by this? Pippin offers

> "One way of thinking about what he is trying to point to is to see the issue as something like a descendant of the 'authenticity' issue in BT. The temptation is to think of authenticity as some determinate state, some achievement in any being-toward-the-future or projection, 'after which' everything looks different to one.   But, I would suggest, it has no such status; there is no *resolution* of the issue of its achievement or failure. It is rather, if the issue is to bear on a being like Dasein, always 'at issue.' Indeed, *that* is what it is; always being at issue and being unresolved."[19]

The word *Verwandlung* (as in *Verwandlung des Menschseins*[20]), Sheehan observes, "is a constant drumbeat throughout Heidegger's work, a call to personal and social transformation."[21] To sustain unending *Verwandlung*, continual exploratory overproduction of variants, the inscrutable complexity of life has welded the throttle open by a quite simple mechanism: "In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nullity."[22]

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[18] *Id.* 210.

[19] *Ibid.* fn. 9.

[20] GA 45:214: https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=45&pg=214 .

[21]Thomas Sheehan, "Rewriting Heidegger," May 13, 2023: https://www.beyng.com/papers/HC2023Sheehan.html#VOLLZUGSSINN .

[22] *Being and Time* 331. *In der Struktur der Geworfenheit sowohl wie in der des Entwurfs liegt wesenhaft eine Nichtigkeit. Sein und Zeit* 285: https://www.beyng.com/pages/de/SeinUndZeit/SeinUndZeit.285.html .