

Variagenics; or, What is ability-to-act-in-light-of-norms *for*?

conscience [*Gewissen*] explains my ability to act not just in accord with,
but also in light of, norms¹

The capacity of a process to evolve, that is, to generate nonlethal functional variation on which selection can act, may be termed the evolvability of a process. . . . Evolvability is itself a biological process, and has undergone its own evolution under selection.²

Ability-to-act-in-light-of-norms is life's latest experiment in evolvability, i.e. in facilitated (deconstrained) variation. Variants are the feedstock of change and Dasein is a system of exploratory overproduction of variants,³ the closest life has come to variability *per se*. To sloganize it, 'transcendence is deconstraint.'

Steven Crowell distinguishes acting in accord with norms from acting in light of norms. By 'norm' Crowell means "anything that serves as a standard of success or failure of any kind." Examples: "a legislated statute is a norm, as are rules of games like chess or baseball; but 'unspoken' rules, satisfaction conditions, cultural mores, manners, what is 'normally' done – in short, whatever it is that *measures* our speech and behavior – are also norms."⁴

From these examples presented early in Crowell's book the reader gets the impression that norms occur only in human life. In due course Crowell dispels that impression. Animals (including us) behave in accordance with the norms peculiar to their way of life, their *das Man* (*Benommenheit*, 'captivation'). Yet whereas animals can behave *only* in accordance with their *das Man*, *only* human beings can also act in light of norms, in light of norms *as* norms. This is the distinction, he says,

¹ Steven Crowell, *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (2013) 206.

² John Gerhart and Marc Kirschner, *Cells, Embryos, and Evolution: Toward a Cellular and Developmental Understanding of Phenotypic Variation and Evolutionary Adaptability* (1997) 614. The notion of deconstraint gets further emphasis in Kirschner and Gerhart, "Evolvability," 95 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S.A.* 8420 (1998); and 'facilitated' is a synonym for 'deconstrained' in their "The theory of facilitated variation," 104 *PNAS* 8582, 8584 (2007). See also their *The Plausibility of Life: Resolving Darwin's Dilemma* (2005).

³ All 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.

⁴ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 2. (All emphasis in original unless otherwise indicated.) But see fn. 9, p. 288: "To speak of acting 'in light of norms' does not entail that these norms are formulated anywhere; **they are not rules**. [my emphasis] Thus acting 'immediately' (i.e., without explicit deliberation) is not incompatible with acting in light of norms rather than merely in accord with them." In this context he is speaking of *phronesis*, saying that *phronesis* is neither codified or codifiable.

“between Dasein’s being at stake in existing and life’s being at stake in a struggle for survival. In the former case, but not the latter, the stakes are determined only insofar as I make myself beholden to a measure of success or failure – and that means, to act not only in conformity to such a measure (as the animal acts in conformity to the measure of survival) but to act in light of it *as* a measure, that is, to take my measure *by* it. . . . To the extent that I act as ‘one’ does, I cannot essentially be distinguished from an entity who acts in conformity to norms though not in light of them [sc. a nonhuman animal].”⁵

A human agent functions within the nexus of history, tradition, and everyday coping practices “in much the same way that she functions within the constraints of nature: she acts in accord with norms but not in light of them.” In this, *Being and Time* Division I’s picture of *das Man*, “it is difficult to distinguish human from animal teleological action.” I.e., “there are reasons for what Larry Bird does on the court, just as there are reasons for what the wasp does, but neither does them *for* those reasons, in light of them.”⁶

What wasp? A telling example is described by Wooldridge:

“When the time comes for egg laying, the wasp *Sphex* builds a burrow for the purpose and seeks out a cricket which she stings in such a way as to paralyze but not kill it. She drags the cricket into the burrow, lays her eggs alongside, closes the burrow, then flies away, never to return. In due course, the eggs hatch and the wasp grubs feed off the paralyzed cricket, which has not decayed, having been kept in the wasp equivalent of a deepfreeze. . . . the wasp’s routine [norm, rule, practice, *Trieb*] is to bring the paralyzed cricket to the burrow, leave it on the threshold, go inside to see that all is well, emerge, and then drag the cricket in. If the cricket is moved [by a human experimenter] a few inches away while the wasp is inside making her preliminary inspection, the wasp, on emerging from the burrow, will bring the cricket back to the threshold, but not inside, and will then repeat the preparatory procedure of entering the burrow to see that everything is all right. If again the cricket is removed a few inches while the wasp is inside, once again she will move the cricket up to the threshold and reenter for a final check.”⁷

And so on, through forty iterations on one occasion, without the wasp ever skipping re-inspection and dragging the cricket immediately in; without behavioral variation. The problem of what to do in case of displacement from the threshold after inspection, apparently

⁵ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 218-219 (Crowell’s italics).

⁶ *Id.* 207.

⁷ Dean E. Wooldridge, *Mechanical Man: the Physical Basis of Intelligent Life* (1968); as quoted in Douglas R. Hofstadter, “Metamagical Themas: *Can inspiration be mechanized?*,” 247 *Scientific American* 18, 22 (1982).

because it's such a black swan, is invisible to natural selection. The step of bringing-to-the-threshold must always be followed by inspection-of-burrow; no shortcuts, no exceptions.

In an ecology where a class of breakdown occurs frequently enough a more complex norm may develop—do *x*; but in case of *Brüchen* do *y*. Such a norm governs the iteroparous earwig mother. Under ordinary conditions she carefully tends her eggs by turning and licking them (her saliva may contain antibiotics, nobody knows). If the nest happens to get disturbed she eats her eggs. If the nest remains undisturbed and the wiglings hatch, they stay in the nest while their mother exhausts herself in repeatedly traveling from the nest to gather food and bring it back to the newborns. When they are robust enough they leave the nest to make their own way in the world. Sometimes it happens that a laggard will not depart the nest for an independent life. Whereupon its starving mother, who must live for the sake of her next brood, eats it.⁸

In other words, a higher order norm may develop as a back-stop or safety feature in case a lower order norm breaks down, becomes infeasible, or its harm outweighs its benefit.

Hofstadter comments on the wasp behavior that it “seems supremely unconscious, a quality totally opposite to what we human beings think we are all about.” He calls the quality of the behavior ‘sphexishness’ and its opposite ‘antisphexishness,’ and proposes that “consciousness is simply the possession of antisphexishness to the highest possible degree.” He then gives twelve examples distributed along a continuum from the most sphexish (the proverbial broken record, a skipping phonograph) to the most antisphexish (“Styles in art that become dated and routinized to the point of no longer being creative. It happens to every style, but at the moment of its happening there are always some people who are breaking out of the rut and creating totally new styles.”).⁹

The more antisphexish examples are characterized, he says, by a “general sensitivity to patterns;” “an ability to see sameness;” viz.:

⁸ For a semelparous species it's the other way around:—the nymphs eat their once-and-done mother alive; “the ultimate Head Start program.” James T. Costa, *The Other Insect Societies* (2006) 63.

⁹ *Can inspiration be mechanized?* 22, 24. Example 9 is “A mathematician, who exploits a simple technique in paper after paper, making advances in different branches of mathematics, yet always with a distinct, idiosyncratic touch and always, in some deep sense, doing ‘just the same trick’ again and again.” *Id.* 24. Reads like a Hofstadter joke about Hofstadter, whose *Grundthema* of ‘recursion’ he has applied in different fields of interest again and again. The example brings to mind the logician Graham Priest’s finding a paradox of self-reference in thinkers as disparate as Plato, Heidegger, and Nagarjuna, then resolving each instance with his apparatus of dialetheism and the inclosure schema. To sloganize it, ‘Transcendence is diagonalization.’ See Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (2d ed. 2002). See also Egbert B. Gebstadter, *Ich bin ein unheimlich Umring* (2007).

“All human beings have that readiness, that alertness [to pattern], and this is what makes them so antisphexish. Whenever they get into some kind of ‘loop,’ they quickly sense it. Something happens in their head—a kind of ‘loop detector’ fires. . . . the possession of this ability to break out of loops of all types seems the antithesis of the mechanical. Or, to put it the other way around, the essence of the mechanical seems to lie in its lack of novelty and its repetitiveness, in its being trapped in some kind of precisely delimited space.”¹⁰

Readiness to see pattern, alertness to pattern, is not enough to characterize antisphexishness uniquely. Gordon writes that “Harvester ants eat seeds, and many seeds contain oleic acid. . . . Apparently, oleic acid functions either as garbage or as food, depending on what the workers that encounter it are doing.”¹¹ What determines what the workers are to do, whether to collect garbage or to forage? The basic notion is that “an ant’s task decision is based on its interaction rate . . . the pattern of interaction, not a signal in the interaction itself, produces the effect. Ants do not tell each other what to do by transferring messages. The signal is not in the contact, or in the chemical information exchanged in the contact. The signal is in the pattern of contact.”¹² And more generally the *Grundnorm* for sexual species is ‘mate with your same kind.’¹³ This norm is impossible to follow for, e.g., Nan and Bill Goats unless they can see each other as ‘the same’ in the relevant respect. Ability to see or otherwise register sameness is thus widespread among nonhuman species.

What Hofstadter means by antisphexishness, it seems, is a general sensitivity to patterns **as** patterns; an ability to see sameness **as** sameness.

Crowell notes that “animals engage in practices, make things, gesture to each other, twitter noisily, exchange information, and so on – but they do not (at least according to Heidegger) have an understanding of being. Their ‘practices’ and ‘communication’ and ‘gestures’ do not

¹⁰ *Can inspiration be mechanized?* 24.

¹¹ Deborah M. Gordon, *Ant Encounters: Interaction Networks and Colony Behavior* (2010) 6.

¹² Deborah M. Gordon, *Ants at Work: How an Insect Society is Organized* (1999) 169.

¹³ ‘Same enough’ anyway. E.g., “The past decade of anthropological genomics has revolutionized our understanding of human evolution. It is now clear that the ancestors of modern humans not only intermixed [had sexual intercourse] with Neanderthals and other archaic hominins, but that the legacy of this contact continues to shape trait variation in humans today. Even as these findings reshape our conception of human origins, they also bring us more closely in line with other animals, including our primate relatives, where hybridization is commonly observed in the wild.” <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.08.19.456711v1.full> . Svante Pääbo’s Nobel Prize Lecture starts at 13:15 here: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2022/paabo/facts/> .

add up to being-in-the-world.”¹⁴ They do, Heidegger tells us, add up to *a* world. “With the *animal* we find *a having of world* and *a not-having of world*.”¹⁵

“The animal is *encircled* [**umringt**] by this ring [*Ring*] constituted by the reciprocal drivenness of its drives [*der wechselseitigen Zugetriebenheit seiner Triebe*]. . . . Instinctual and subservient capability for ___ , the totality of its self-absorbed capability, is an instinctual drivenness of the instinctual drives which encircle the animal. It does so in such a way that it is precisely this *encirclement* [**Umring**] which makes possible the behaviour in which the animal is related to other things. . . . The encirclement of the animal within the interrelated drivenness of its instinctual drives is intrinsically open for [*in sich ein Offensein für*] that which disinhibits it. . . . the encirclement is precisely *drawn about* the animal in such a way that it *opens up* [*ein öffnendes Ziehen*] a sphere [*eines Umrings*] within which whatever disinhibits can do so in this or that manner. . . . the animal surrounds itself with a *disinhibiting ring* [**Enthemmungsring**] which prescribes what can affect or occasion its behaviour. . . . the life of the animal is precisely the struggle [*Ring*] to maintain this encircling ring or sphere within which a quite specifically articulated manifold of disinhibition [*Mannigfaltigkeit von Enthemmungen*] can arise. . . . The way in which the animal is in each case taken by the whole is directed by the range of possible disinhibitions within its encirclement [*Die Hingenommenheit des Tieres je von dem Ganzen liegt in der Richtung der möglichen Enthemmungen innerhalb seines Umrings*].”¹⁶

Umring is to the other animals as the ontological horizon is to Dasein; the horizon which ‘opens up’ the field of entities as affordances for Dasein’s engagement. *Das Man* operates as *Enthemmung* insofar as it ‘prescribes what can affect or occasion’ Dasein’s comportment. As Crowell puts it *das Man* aspires to the character of recipe.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 233.

¹⁵ *Im Tier ist ein Haben von Welt und ein Nichthaben von Welt. Gesamtausgabe Band 29/30*: 390: <https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=29.30&pg=390> . Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker 1995) 268.

¹⁶ GA 29/30: 363, 369, 370, 371. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 249, 253, 255. Heidegger’s *Enthemmungsring* bears a family resemblance to Richard Woltereck’s *Reaktionsnorm*. As far as I can find out Heidegger did not know Woltereck’s pioneering work, published in 1909: *Weitere experimentelle Untersuchungen über Artveränderung, speziell über das Wesen quantitativer. Artunterschiede bei Daphniden*. (Soon reviewed favorably in the United States at 32 *Science* 344-345 (1910).) Heidegger **did** know the work of his Freiburg colleague Hans Spemann (and Hilde Mangold) and praises Spemann in *FCM* (silent on Mangold). The irony is that Heidegger’s schema of disinhibition better captures the mechanics of Spemann-Mangold embryonic induction than did the initial understanding of it: “At the time, it was thought this induction must entail detailed instructions to the responding cells. A surprising discovery of the past decade is that the organizer [a small cluster of cells] acts by secreting a few inhibitors (antagonists) that do not even bind to the responding cells. Instead, they antagonize an inhibitory signal secreted and received by the nearby cells in a self-inhibitory circuit to block their development of the nervous system. The organizer, via its antagonist, disrupts the self-inhibition, and neurogenesis commences.” “The theory of facilitated variation” 8585.

¹⁷ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 218.

The difference is in Dasein's capacity to see prescriptions *as* prescriptions; *as* constraints, directives, imperatives, controls:—*as* norms. The preeminent phenomenon of this capacity occurs in the breakdown that is *Angst*. Dasein is care, *Sorge*, and the three moments of care (*Befindlichkeit*, *Verstehen*, and *Rede*) are always in flux. Anxiety, Crowell writes, "is a distinctive affectedness because it neutralizes the claims things normally exert on me and so also the reasons they provide for what I do." *Angst's* corresponding mode of understanding is death; not bodily demise but, in Heidegger's formulation, the "possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there." In Crowell's "an existential condition in which I am no longer able to gear into the world in terms of roles and practices, with the result that things have properties but no affordances, and the motives and reasons the latter once supplied now take on the character of something closer to simple facts, items of the world of which I can take note but which do not move me." Finally, the third moment "of discourse that articulates the intelligibility of breakdown" is the call of conscience. The call calls 'guilty' (*schuldig*); which guilt "cannot be explained with reference to any law, whether conventional, rational/moral, or divine."¹⁸

Our focus here is on the breakdown-phenomenon's aspect of deconstraint. *Angst* in Heidegger's sense "reveals something like a global incapacity vis-à-vis the normativity of all laws and oughts: existing norms present themselves as mere facts; they have no more normative force than does the code of Hammurabi." Things "lose their *grip* on me. The normative force that they normally exert has dissipated; affordances have taken on the inertness of mere social facts. . . . Normally, I am my possibilities – father, teacher, carpenter – in the typical manner of the one-self. But *Angst* immobilizes all that and reveals me as being-possible (*Möglichsein = Seinkönnen*) *as such*." In breakdown the various possibilities for being a self which I inherit from my culture, my embodiment, my particular social relations, or any combination of these "show themselves to be *inert*, mere demands that lack the power to move me."¹⁹

Heidegger's Christian heritage includes the theme of the Fortunate Fall—"Yet all our honey in that poison grewe"²⁰—and he uses its analog the Fortunate Breakdown to think in accordance with philosophy's inveterate norm of imparting good news,²¹ or inventing it. For "in the

¹⁸ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 204-205.

¹⁹ *Id.* 205, 220, 221.

²⁰ Giles Fletcher, *Christ's Triumph Over Death* (1610), as quoted in Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," 4 *ELH* 161, 167 fn. 10 (1937). "a gentle and most loving antiperistasis" (St. Francis de Sales). *Id.* 177. Cf. *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/ Das Rettende auch*.

²¹ "Philosophy, and in particular moral philosophy, is still deeply attached to giving good news." Bernard Williams, "The Women of Trachis: Fictions, Pessimism, Ethics," in *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy* (ed. Myles Burnyeat 2006) 49. "Nietzsche correctly diagnosed the philosophical tradition as deeply optimistic." Raymond Geuss, "Thucydides, Nietzsche, and Williams," in *Outside Ethics* (2005) 223. "And [philosophy's] art of

existential condition of *Angst*/death Dasein can also [unlike the other animals] discover a hidden resource, its being-guilty, the ability to *take over* being-a-ground.”²² Accordingly, *Mit der nüchternen Angst, die vor das vereinzelte Seinkönnen bringt, geht die gerüstete Freude an dieser Möglichkeit zusammen.*²³

Angst as breakdown is therefore “rather a ground for self-congratulation”²⁴ because *Angst* “is possible for Bird but not for wasp.” Not for wasp, only for human being “that in whose grip I was when geared into the world now confronts me as an inert fact, something without normative force.”²⁵ *Angst* deconstrains Dasein, Dasein alone, from norms. Only by virtue of such deconstraint can Dasein act in light of norms, not merely in accordance. “As the one-self I have my reasons for what I do, but the one-self as such cannot really be distinguished from the carpenter ant who acts in accord with norms but not in light of them.”²⁶

Crowell shows that *Schuldigsein* is Dasein’s *felix culpa* in that it constitutes our *Ur*-norm, the call *schuldig!*, which we might translate by *Answer!* He notes that “To be guilty is to try to be I-myself, and that, finally is to try at taking over being-a-ground. . . . beholdenness to norms as such.” I.e., to be responsible, *verantwortlich*. *Verantwortlichkeit* “transforms a creature who is ‘grounded’ by social norms [as are all social animals] into a ground of obligation – one who ‘grounds’ norms by *giving* grounds, that is, reasons.” So Crowell concludes that “to be I-myself is to be under an *obligation* to offer reasons to others for what I do. My ‘nature’ as care entails a moral obligation insofar as taking over being-a-ground obliges me to take up the practice of giving and asking for reasons, a kind of meta-practice that thus belongs among the norms of all particular practical identities. . . . we do have something like a moral obligation to engage in practical reason-giving, since that is an essential part of what it means to be a social creature who can say ‘I’.”²⁷

By virtue of *Schuldigsein* we, unlike the other animals, become ‘autotelic’ Crowell says.²⁸ “By opening up a space in which I can recognize something like a claim, my response to the call transforms the ‘nature’ which I share with all conforming herd animals into a meaningful world.”²⁹ “*Vorgriff* belongs to understanding as the moment of normativity as such: the

unknowingness takes long and patient exploration.” Adam Phillips, Introduction to Sigmund Freud, *Wild Analysis* (2002) xviii. Phillips wrote ‘the neurotic’s.’

²² *Normativity and Phenomenology* 189.

²³ *Sein und Zeit* 310.

²⁴ “Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall” 161.

²⁵ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 207.

²⁶ *Id.* 295.

²⁷ *Id.* 302-303, 187, 303.

²⁸ *Id.* 175.

²⁹ *Id.* 213.

anticipation of a shared public form [linguisticality, *Verantwortlichkeit*] that lifts the expressions and gestures of groping animality into the clearing (*Lichtung*) of being (intelligibility).³⁰ This exaltative metamorphosis is summarized in Heidegger's saying, "Dasein as existing has always already surpassed nature."³¹ *Mazel tov*.

Heidegger avers, however, that 'proper' *Angst* is rare, »*Eigentliche*« *Angst ist . . . selten*.³² Yet even as this preeminent instance of the phenomenon is of uncommon occurrence, other disclosive breakdowns are, like insights, a dime a dozen,³³ densely distributed in human experience.

So Crowell writes, "In the face of the collapse of the one-self," in the breakdown that is *Angst*, "Dasein confronts the question, 'Why *this* way and not otherwise?' [GA 9: 169] and thereby becomes accountable."³⁴ "But it often happens," he also says, "that my projects are disturbed by glitches and snags that disrupt the flow, major or minor breakdowns that make it difficult for me to go on. At such times I am forced to take stock of my situation, to reflect, to consider what should be done. At such times I am forced to deliberate."³⁵ In fact that's the way breakdowns happen and happen to everyone; task and project breakdowns are the principal phenomenon here, the way change happens.³⁶

And specifically human change happens, is facilitated by—in evophysiologicals' jargon—'weak regulatory linkage.' *Das Man*, in contrast to the wasp's *Benommenheit*, only weakly regulates Dasein's comportment, allowing great flexibility of behavioral response to context and situation, a hyperexploratory reaction norm.³⁷

³⁰ *Id.* 234.

³¹ *Obzwar inmitten des Seienden seiend und von ihm umfungen, hat das Dasein als existierendes die Natur immer schon überstiegen.* GA 9: 139: <https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=9.00&pg=139> . Quoted in *Normativity and Phenomenology* at 208.

³² *Sein und Zeit* 190.

³³ "Observing lets intelligence be puzzled, and we inquire. Inquiry leads to the delight of insight, but insights are a dime a dozen, so critical reasonableness doubts, checks, makes sure." Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (2d ed. 1973) 13.

³⁴ *Normativity and Phenomenology* 212.

³⁵ *Id.* 289.

³⁶ On the variety of disclosive breakdowns see Katherine Withy, "The Methodological Role of *Angst* in *Being and Time*," 43 *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 195 (2012):

<https://www.beyng.com/docs/Withy-Angst.html> .

³⁷ "In *somatic selection*, sometimes called epigenetic selection, large numbers of random, or possibly chaotic [*sensu mathematico*], variants, modifications, movements, or positions are produced, and then some variants are selectively preserved or reinforced, while the remainder are unoccupied or eliminated. Individual variants act semi-independently, depending on local conditions, in accord with simple rules. The result is establishment of functional pattern without central coordination of elements. These mechanisms are highly plastic because the dispersed, independently responding elements can sense and adjust finely to a spatially [or semiotically] heterogeneous field. The high degree of flexibility provided by overproduction of variants permits the active,

In propaedeutic remarks on Crowell's book Sheehan writes that "in Heidegger's phenomenology the so-called in-itself-ness of a thing is not its οὐσία or substance or 'being,' its stand-alone, unchanging essential structure but rather its current and very changeable (*jeweilig*) significance to the person or persons experientially engaged with that thing within a specific context of concern and interest."³⁸ Significance is only changeable because Dasein's experiential engagement with things is deconstrained. In Sheehan's favorite example Dasein can use a rock as a mallet, or a missile, or a geological specimen. Traditional example: "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

This mode of variability, sense-forming, is new to nature (local nature anyway), just as behavior itself was once new. To say that this new mode of variant-production 'surpasses' nature is misleading insofar as it implies that there is anywhere else to go, or be. Nature's experiment in sense-making poses the question of whether this unique mode of hyperproduction of functional variations is on balance nonlethal to the experiment's subject-species. What will happen if the subject-species notices that the experiment is trending towards lethality? That is, if Dasein suspects that the ecological consequence of its hypervariability is "a manifestation of a general principle of historical development of any system: that the conditions which make possible the coming into being of a state of the system are abolished by that state."³⁹

Sheehan notes elsewhere that "The early Heidegger said we are 'prisoners of meaningfulness' [*bedeutsamkeitsgefangen*]."⁴⁰ That is,

"Heidegger argues we cannot *not* make sense of things because sense-making—the 'disclosing' of things, whether correctly or not—is a fundamental element of our nature. We are the living beings who have Λόγος, and therefore 'the very being of ex-sistence is to make sense of things,' not just occasionally or as an add-on, but necessarily."⁴¹

dynamic circumvention of a genetically [or socially] fixed stable or equilibrium state." *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution* 37 (citations omitted).

³⁸ Thomas Sheehan, "Phenomenology Rediviva," in *Transcending Reason: Heidegger's Reconceptualization of Phenomenology* (ed. Matthew Burch and Irene McMullin 2020) 260:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bJeBn4TwTEgtPii9YwuK4x_Rk44FDuvz/view .

³⁹ Lewontin's dialectical restatement of Leigh Van Valen's 'Red Queen's hypothesis.' See Richard Lewontin, *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism, and Environment* (2000) 58-60.

⁴⁰ Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger: πᾶθος as the thing itself," in *Heidegger on Affect* (ed. Christos Hadjioannou 2019): <https://www.beyng.com/docs/TomSheehanPathos.html> .

⁴¹ *Id.* Freud began the treatment of a juvenile patient "by assuring him that when he closes his eyes he will see images, or ideas will come into his mind [*er werde nach dem Augenschluß Bilder sehen oder Einfälle bekommen*] which he should tell me." *The Interpretation of Dreams* (tr. Joyce Crick 1999) 410. How did Freud know that would happen? The phenomenon is best appreciated by experiment. Close your eyes in a darkened, quiet room and attend to the blackness behind your eyelids. Notice that it is not uniform but very subtly textured. Continue to

So in one respect we are sphexish after all, unable to jump our proper sharkness. For us “‘the real’ is not simply what’s-out-there-now; it is *the meaningful*—not necessarily the ‘true,’ but always the meaningful. *Huis clos*: there is no *hors-texte*, no exit from meaning. For us who are condemned to λόγος, outside of meaning there is only death.”⁴²

Finally, Crowell’s book made me think of the neighbor kids Andy and Sid in (the first) *Toy Story*. Sid is what William Shockley might have been like as a child. The adult Shockley was by many accounts a shit and by all accounts a helluvan engineer. So I have in mind here Sid’s ‘absolute value,’ setting aside his cruelty and considering only his inventiveness. We then can imagine an Andy-to-Sid range of ontological reaction norms. Andy is *das Man* incarnate:—treats his toys properly, heeds his mother, etc. Sid is mad for novelty and deconstrained in its pursuit. He demands of any toy he encounters *warum so und nicht anders?* and proceeds through violent *diaeresis* and *synthesis* to fashion them (he’s deft with a soldering iron) into new combinations (a pterodactyl head for a tank-turret). Sid’s mania in turn made me think of what Pääbo said to Elizabeth Kolbert: “We are crazy in some way. What drives it? That I would really like to understand. That would be really, really cool to know.”⁴³

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observe that texture; let this be your present task; as Fichte might have put it, ‘*Think the texture!*’ Soon you will find that you are no longer attending to the texture but playing little scenes, ‘having thoughts,’ seeing images, etc., and the texture of the darkness is nowhere in mind. Freud’s great insight was that these spontaneous variants are not produced strictly at random, but, as West-Eberhard uses the term, ‘chaotically’: “‘Chaos’ is a kind of variability that differs from randomness in having, over the long term, deterministic pattern ‘constrained to an attractor’ whose dimensions can be ascertained by measuring the observed variation. Pure random fluctuations, by contrast, are not so constrained but are space filling. Chaos implies deterministic constraints on variability, which presumably could evolve under selection on factors that affect the dimensions of the ‘attractor’—**whatever these factors may prove to be in an organism.**” *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution* 38 (my emphasis). Freud worked to identify and describe the variety of chaotic attractors in the Unconscious. Psychoanalysis is, in essence, coming to know your attractors; how and why they’re **your** attractors. Its method of *freier Einfall* depends on chaotic overproduction of variants. The *recounting* of these variants depends on deconstraint from *das Man*’s norms: “to switch off the critical faculty [the analysand] normally uses to sift the thoughts arising in him,” “not allowing himself to be tempted to suppress one idea occurring to him because it appears to him unimportant or irrelevant to the subject, another because it appears nonsensical.” *The Interpretation of Dreams* 81.

⁴² “Phenomenology Rediviva” 264.

⁴³ Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014) 252.