

Language is the mitochondrion of Being

*Shall I project a world?*¹

Charles Taylor's tetralogy² compendiously documents two of Heidegger's central findings:—Dasein is the self-interpreting, self-articulating entity;³ humankind is world-building.⁴ In a review of *Cosmic Connections* Stephen Mulhall summarizes the thesis of *The Language Animal* as "human beings are self-interpreting animals . . . the identity of any human being is determined by their interpretation of that identity, which is itself bound up with their interpretation of the objects and situations they encounter."⁵

The Language Animal is Taylor's Φυσικά, his treatise on the specifically human mode of change—self-interpretation/self-articulation; a work propaedeutic to his three focused studies of (Western) world-building.⁶ In *TLA* Taylor analyzes the two varieties of semantic logic, Hobbes-Locke-Condillac and Hamann-Herder-Humboldt. Such are the two arms of Taylor's Master Merism. HLC is *Aufklärungsartig*, HHH is Romantic.⁷ HLC is normative,⁸ HHH anarchic. HLC is instrumentalist, HHH disclosive.⁹ Given the Master Merism, I'm inclined to say that HHH is

¹ Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) ch. 4.

² *Sources of the Self* (1989), *A Secular Age* (2007), *The Language Animal* (2016), and *Cosmic Connections* (2024).

³ *das Dasein selbst ist sichauslegendes, sichaussprechendes Seiendes*. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe Band 20:418*: <https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=20&pg=418> .

⁴ *der Stein ist weltlos, das Tier ist weltarm, der Mensch ist weltbildend*. GA 29/30: 273:

<https://www.beyng.com/tmp/DE/GA29-30/GA29-30.273.html> .

⁵ "Self Interpreting Animals," 47 (No. 18) *London Review of Books* 9 October 2025;

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v47/n18/stephen-mulhall/self-interpreting-animals> (paywalled).

⁶ The problem with *Cosmic Connections*, says Mulhall, is that "for any reader unfamiliar with Taylor's other writings, this book doesn't provide the tools needed properly to understand these intimations of deeper significance. Without some appreciation of its contexts, it will be hard to see that Taylor's basic concern here is not really or primarily literary: it is with the nature of Western European modernity, and its immense, traumatic impact on our sense of ourselves and our place in the universe. The most proximate of those contexts is what Taylor refers to as this book's companion volume [i.e., *The Language Animal*]." *Ibid.*

⁷ "I would argue that Heidegger's intuitions about the nature and power of language, and particularly poetry, owe a lot to the understanding of both which came to expression in the Romantic generation of the 1790s, who were inspired by what I have been calling the HHH. . . . The link between [*The Language Animal* and *Cosmic Connections*] is the Romantic theory of language, here called the HHH, which underlies them both." *The Language Animal* 342-343, 345.

⁸ "[T]he glaring inadequacies of the HLC were dealt with convincingly in what we might call the 'Frege revolution', which has been the basis for much twentieth-century analytic philosophy. . . . the original HLC ambition to give a 'modest', mystery-free account of language, considered as consisting primarily in its depictive power, got a new lease on life, once it had undergone the Frege revolution. . . . [T]he normative constructions of post-Fregean philosophy . . . try to draw the boundaries of reliable empirical language. . . . [L]ike the HLC, modern mainstream post-Fregean analytic philosophy generates accounts of language which have a close affinity to its normative programs, conceived as programs for generating acceptable language as such." *Id.* 118, 119, 132, 133.

⁹ An HHH-style new way of articulating a situation is "a new way of disclosing it (or 'making it show up', to use Bert Dreyfus's rendering of Heidegger's 'erschliessen')." "To lapse for a minute into Heideggerese, different templates

fat and HLC is lean;¹⁰ that HLC is *der Ich*, HHH *das Unbewusste*; HLC is Apollo, HHH is Dionysus; HLC is Torah, HHH is Gospel. Furthermore that HHH is higher-dimensional than HLC, has many degrees of freedom, is deconstrained in its inventivity. *Die Sprache als jene dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht.*¹¹ Yet Taylor insists on speaking of the power of language under its HHH aspect as ‘constitutive;’ whereas ‘dynamic’ or ‘generative’ or ‘metabolic’ strike me as often nearer the mark. ‘Nature loveth gerundives’ type of thing.

HLC is designative, HHH is regestaltive. Scientific and technical and everyday neologizing proceed because “independently existing phenomena come to our notice and are named.”¹²

“But this is not the only scenario for the creation of new terms. There are cases where we feel a sense that there’s something new to be said. This may be at first inchoate; we are groping for something, we know not quite what. And then we coin the new expression which resolves this tension. We have found the ‘right’ word. Then this can be taken up by others, sometimes immediately, and even without noticing the neologism, sometimes after consideration. They also see this as fitting, appropriate, the ‘right’ word; it becomes part of the language.”¹³

The moments of this right-wording process map onto those of insight, as enumerated by Lonergan:

“What we have to grasp is that insight (1) comes as a release to the tension of inquiry, (2) comes suddenly and unexpectedly, (3) is a function not of outer circumstances but of inner conditions, (4) pivots between the concrete and the abstract, and (5) passes into the habitual texture of one’s mind.”¹⁴

Yet insights are, in Lonergan’s telling, “a dime a dozen.”¹⁵ Likewise Taylorian right-word findings are two-for-a-nickel. Most insights and right-wordings are pocket-change magnitudes of the phenomenon that Taylor rightwords as ‘regestaltling.’ On the other hand serious moolah may come by way of an “existential insight,” “through meeting, or hearing about, some paradigmatic

‘disclose’ rather different things, a different shape of the domain in question (as I too, lapse into metaphor). And what discloses some things can also hide others.” “[T]he way human language actually works, in the wild, as it were, involves disclosing things through metaphors and templates, in short bifocally.” *Id.* 152, 160, 161.

¹⁰ After Wittgenstein on ‘Tuesday’ and ‘Wednesday,’ *Philosophical investigations* II, §274. Discussed in Hans Julius Schneider, *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning: Imagination and Calculation [Phantasie und Kalkül]* (tr. Timothy Doyle and Daniel Smyth 2014) 86.

¹¹ Nietzsche wrote ‘*das Leben.*’ <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/HL-3> ; near the end of section 3.

¹² *The Language Animal* 287.

¹³ *Id.* 137.

¹⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* ([1957] ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran 1992) 28.

¹⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1971) 13.

figure (the Buddha, St. Francis), or by reading a book about ethics or the meaning of life, or (more often) through reading a novel or seeing a film.” The impact of such insight

“can be described as a regestalting of our world and its possibilities, which opens a new (to us) way of being. So we can speak here of a regestalting constitution. We can sometimes win through to this regestalting on our own, where under the pressure of some quandary, or difficult decision, we come to see our possibilities in a new light (and this may then retrospectively connect up with something we read or encountered earlier, which is now itself reassessed in the light of our new insight [cf. Freud’s *Nachträglichkeit*]). In whatever way, regestalting offers us new terms or models to understand our lives.”¹⁶

We can also speak here of the shape of a distribution, in that the force of the impact of regestalting is inversely proportional to its frequency—the bigger the fewer. The bulk of the distribution resides in the dime-a-dozen/two-for-a-nickel leftward bulb of a right-skew plot (frequency on the y-axis, force on the x), with the rare, high-impact existential events lying far out in the long right tail. A Gutenberg-Richter-ish model of regestalting. We might even caption the segment of the x-axis beneath the bulb with Hamann’s saying, *Reden ist übersetzen*; and the segment under the right tail with the Torso’s words to Rilke: *Du musst dein Leben ändern*.¹⁷

And this model scales up from populations of regestalts within individuals to populations of regestalts within ever broader swaths of shared human experience, thereby displaying the self-similar texture of *Verwandlungsgeschichte*. Or it would if we could finesse the measurement problem. Anyhow this model is a provisional heuristic more or less formally indicating—handwaving in the general direction of—what we sense as the Vagaries of *Verstehen*.

With phrases such as Aristotle’s ‘animal possessing language,’ Taylor says,

“we are trying to answer questions like: ‘what is human nature?’ This is often conceived on analogy to other animals; something one can describe in terms of instincts and recurring behavior patterns. But the emergence of language seems to have introduced

¹⁶ *The Language Animal* 46. Cf. Schneider on “the possibility of linguistic projection”: “in some situations creative ways of handling these ‘rogue’ sentences may be available which are not covered by current practices. New and sensible applications of sentences may be invented and guessed correctly, and may then themselves become established linguistic practices.” *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning* 161.

¹⁷ *Cosmic Connections: Poetry in the Age of Disenchantment* (2024) at 26 and 35 for these two *Sprüche* respectively. Cf.: “forms of expression are constantly being used in novel ways in the evolution of languages, ways that point beyond those that have gone before. The *constitutive* case, one in which the new application cannot be replaced by a ‘literal’ formulation already in existence, is not only *characteristic* for natural languages but is also, quantitatively speaking, the dominant and in this sense the ‘normal’ case.” *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning* 94.

much greater flexibility, a capacity to change, even to transform ourselves, which has no parallel among other animals.”¹⁸

But introduction of greater flexibility, of capacity to change and even to metamorphose is **the** recurring pattern of the history of life on Earth. *Sprachesein* is the distal segment of life’s grand-scale serial homology:—‘again, but different.’

Gould informs us that Richard ‘Dinosaur’ Owen defined serial homology as “the iteration of an archetypal form *within* the same organism in a set of repeated parts, perhaps each specialized for a particular function, but still bearing signs of the common architectural plan—as in the biramous appendages of arthropods, whether specialized as antennae, mouth parts, walking legs or genital claspers; and in the arms and legs of tetrapods.”¹⁹

In a chapter titled ‘The Figuring Dimension of Language’ Taylor writes that “the creative-inventive side of language”—which he also calls the Cratylid dimension—“involves figuring A through B;” that is, figuration posits “a relation between whole domains, whereby one is structured though a template derived from another.”²⁰ And structural templates, “where the structure of domain B is used to make sense of domain A in some systematic fashion . . . can combine to form cognitive models, scenarios, narratives, semantic frames that give their shape to more ‘abstract’ domains of cultural and social interactions, or even to scientific or mathematical theories.”²¹ Now insofar as it is a kind of conservation law, serial homology is a template of *figura futurorum*. Consider the Mad Rabbi’s claim that he comes not to liquidate (*solvere*) the Judaic *Welt* (life via the Law and the Prophets), but to sate it (*adimplere*): Μη νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας: οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι. *Matt.* 5:17. Typological exegetes see in this kerygma a serial homology (not their phrase), a Plan-conserving progression through Old Testament to New. The third and final segment of the divine series will be the consummation of the undertakings of the first two. As Auerbach expounds it, “the confrontation of the two poles, figure and fulfillment, is sometimes replaced by a development in three stages: the Law or history of the Jews as a prophetic *figura* for the appearance of Christ; the incarnation as fulfillment of this *figura* and at the same time as a new promise of the end of the world and the Last Judgment; and finally, the future occurrence of these events as ultimate fulfillment.”²² *Heilsgeschichte* as a three-segment serial homolog, like the forelimb of a mantis.

¹⁸ *The Language Animal* 338-339.

¹⁹ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (2002) 1072.

²⁰ *The Language Animal* 145, 157.

²¹ *Id.* 146, 156.

²² Erich Auerbach, “*Figura*,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (tr. Ralph Manheim 1959) 41: https://complit.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/COL1000H_Erich_Aurbach_Figura.pdf.

Auerbach esteems *figura* as “the creative, formative principle, change amid the enduring essence, the shades of meaning between copy and archetype.” For figural interpretation, he explains, “establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first.” Importantly for present purposes, the attitude embodied in the figural interpretation (“figuring A through B”) “became one of the essential elements of the Christian picture of reality, history, and the concrete world in general.”²³

A Secular Age recounts how, over the course of five centuries, the Christian picture of reality was eclipsed by the modern through a complex process of disenchantment. In that account Taylor analyzes the various aspects of the disenchanting-process, how through building the modern world the enchanted one was lost. Among what remains (is conserved) of that lost world is the need/desire for enchantment, for ‘cosmic connection.’²⁴ *Cosmic Connections* recounts the ways certain of the Romantic and post-Romantic poets have fashioned enchantment in new versions; Percy Shelley’s ‘subtler languages’ (Wallace Stevens’s ‘ghostlier demarcations’²⁵); ‘again but different.’

Taylor begins by looking at the ways

“that the poetic tradition has diversified. The starting point of the ‘poetic tradition,’ as I am trying to expound it, is the generation of the 1790s in Germany. What was elaborated there was the basic idea of two kinds of language, or uses of language: a dead, instrumental one, and a living, disclosive, epiphanic one. This starts off in close symbiosis with a unified theory, englobing philosophy and poetics, that was worked out, and in broad lines more or less accepted, by this generation, which included Hölderlin, Novalis, the Schlegels, Schiller, Schelling, and the young Hegel: both Nature and human beings are in development; both these developments are linked—our destiny is to grasp and give expression to the development of Nature, and indeed, this grasp completes that development by bringing it to consciousness.”²⁶

One (post-Romantic) way to grasp and give expression to the development of **living** Nature is to look again at Leonard Eisenberg’s Tree of Life:

https://evogeneao.s3.amazonaws.com/images/tree_of_life/tree-of-life_2000.png By traversing all the way to the right of the diagram we find the twig ‘Human.’ Now imagine magnifying that twig to the same size as the original diagram. What structure would we see? The shape of the

²³ *Id.* 49, 53.

²⁴ “I am proposing that the need/desire for cosmic connection has been a perennial feature of human life.” *Cosmic Connections* 596.

²⁵ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43431/the-idea-of-order-at-key-west> .

²⁶ *Cosmic Connections* 95.

original diagram again:—an emergence ramifying densely outward in time. Only now the branches and twigs are *Welten*, ways of being.²⁷ Our destiny—the dynamic of our segment in the serio-fractal homology that is life—is to generate variety in worlds, to explore and thereby create the possibility space of *Bedeutsamkeit*. At least until that dynamic shall have destroyed the conditions of its possibility (Lewontin), *und die klugen Thiere mussten sterben* (Nietzsche), “as myriads have gone extinct” (Darwin).²⁸ Before there was any Dasein, as Heidegger puts it, “there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more.”²⁹

The truth of interest in *Cosmic Connections* is revealed in consciousness of the Plan. Views from antiquity through the Enlightenment “took the universe as manifestation of an Idea, plan, or purpose. . . . All this the Romantics took over. . . . The difference comes in how they conceived our access to this order of signs.”³⁰

“Human language, and thus artistic creation, is something very different from the language in things—that is, the universe as a manifestation of the Plan. But this language/creation can to some extent bridge the gap, can offer approximations of what the universe reveals. That is the best we can do. But it is crucial. . . . recovering some contact with the Plan is of the first importance for human beings. This both reveals to us what it is to live up to our highest potential and empowers us to do so.”³¹

The last two sentences of this passage help us to see that Heidegger—in striking ways so like German thinkers of the 1790s—was in fact a **mutant** Romantic. At least the Heidegger of *Being and Time* was. For that which reveals to us, per *Sein und Zeit*, what it is to live up to our highest potential and empowers us to do so is the existential insight that

There is no Plan, Stan.
Forget about a Key, Lee.
Just hop off the Bus, Gus,
And get yourself free.³²

²⁷ Or in Lane’s imagery, human existence as a jet of variations within life’s “bubbling fountain of variations.” Nick Lane, *Power, Sex, Suicide: Mitochondria and the meaning of life* (2d ed. 2018) 26.

²⁸ E.g. by way of toxic transcendence: <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04158> .

²⁹ <https://www.beyng.com/pages/en/BeingandTimeSS/BeingandTimeSS.217.html> .

³⁰ *Cosmic Connections* 25.

³¹ *Id.* 39.

³² Adapted from Paul Simon, “50 Ways to Leave Your Lover” (1975). “*Being and Time* is both an analysis of existence and an exhortation to face the music and make a life-changing decision. As it did for Heidegger, facing the music would mean confronting the catastrophic fact that Nietzsche called ‘the death of God’—the collapse of the sacred canopy under which humanity had sheltered since time immemorial—and then starting over again from scratch. Starting over would mean resolving to live your life in full awareness of its fundamental absurdity, its resounding deafness (*surditas*) to all questions about why you are here and whether you have any final purpose other than to keep on keeping on. The promised outcome would be a revolution in how you understand the world, conjoined with what the ancients called *kainōtēs zōēs*, a new way of living that would be part of ‘a higher history

Taylor notes that the Romantics “made two crucial amendments to the tradition of languages of reality (or insight into reality)”:

“(1) On the ontological level, the Plan is no longer seen on the Platonic model as laid out in Ideas of perfection existing in eternity, but is rather understood as a direction of growth, toward which reality is tending; and (2) on the epistemological level, our grasp of the Plan is also incapable of matching it exactly, but rather constitutes a kind of translation in our terms of its thrust.”³³

We can see something of what Taylor calls ‘template,’ Auerbach *figura*, and Owen ‘serial homology’ in what Schneider, interpreting the later Wittgenstein, calls ‘projective step.’ “An existent form of expression,” writes Schneider, “is used in a new context of application . . . and is thus ‘projected’ onto new kinds of objects.” “The starting point of projection is a pre-existing grammatical form, at first necessarily specific to a *particular* area of discourse, which is then carried into *new* areas of discourse in a free, spontaneous act of creative imagination.” Of a projection through which a secondary meaning is constituted, it is “typical that it creates for the first time a possible articulation: the ‘figurative expression’ is used to open up an area of discourse that otherwise, without the projective step, would not be available.” If rules of surface grammar—the ‘algebraic’ forms of linguistic ‘calculation’—are to hand and mastered, “they invite transformations, projections, ‘misusages’; – that is, they invite new, schematically unfathomable moves.” (¿*Que es mas macho, pineapple o knife?*³⁴) That “the imagination (projection) is intertwined with [linguistic] calculation . . . should be considered a characteristic feature of natural languages.”³⁵ Considered their depth-grammar, *tiefe Grammatik*.

These considerations might lead us to guess once more that human *Verwandlungsgeschichte* consists of projective steps, big and small, in something like a power-law distribution. Disenchantment has resulted from the cumulative effect of certain high-impact projective steps. In this light the Axial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution can be viewed as a one-two punch. (Taylor’s ‘Great Disembedding’ was already implicit in the Axial revolution.³⁶) So that the Romantics’ regestaling of the Plan can be projected in our secular day as affirming that Yes, there is a direction of growth toward which reality is tending, and that direction is the arrow of time. The arrow of time is our experience of the growth of entropy; reality is the fact of

than humankind has known heretofore.’ The transformation would start with the shock of realizing there is ultimately no ground under your feet, no Power that has your back, no rescue from your mortality.” Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger’s Being and Time Paraphrased and Annotated, Volume 1* (2025) xv. Of realizing “Nothing was coming. Nothing was already here.” Thomas Pynchon, *V.* (1963), Ch. V, § v.

³³ *Cosmic Connections* 39.

³⁴ Laurie Anderson, “Smoke rings” (1986).

³⁵ *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning* 83, 84, 86-87, 93.

³⁶ *A Secular Age* 146.

ever-growing entropy. We contribute to this growth with our lives, which, like all lives, are channels accelerating the thrust of entropy's increase. Howsoever life does its living—however keeping on keeps on—increases entropy. Whenever you are, entropy grows from then—*Die Wüste wächst*—and *tempus* accordingly *fugit*. *Magnificat anima mea dominum*. And if the quantity of entropy does in fact increase without limit, then *Entropie ist das transwendens schlechthin*.³⁷

HLC is eidological, HHH is variagenic. West-Eberhard reports that

“Much recent progress has been made toward integrating developmental and evolutionary biology . . . ‘Developmental constraints’ is a term symptomatic of this progress, though an unfortunate one because it seems to imply that the main effect of development is to restrict (rather than provide opportunities for) evolutionary change. The previous generation of evolutionists interested in development likewise frequently emphasized conservative aspects—canalization and stabilizing selection—the suppression of deviant variation during development and evolution to produce a functional phenotype near a single adaptive norm.”

The Forms still tool us from their graves. Whereas West-Eberhard's vision focuses on the “importance of plasticity as a diversifying factor in evolution—a factor contributing to the origin of novel traits and to altered directions of change.”³⁸ The ἀρχή of this plasticity-paradigm gets expressed in Bateson's apothegm: “Variation, in fact, *is* Evolution.”³⁹ Or as Gould once put it, “the deepest meaning of the Darwinian revolution [is] to view natural reality as composed of varying individuals in populations—that is, to understand variation itself as irreducible, as ‘real’ in the sense of ‘what the world is made of.’”⁴⁰ Variation as life's *tiefe Grammatik*.

Recall now Taylor's claim that “the emergence of language seems to have introduced much greater flexibility, a capacity to change, even to transform ourselves, which has no parallel among other animals.”⁴¹ But again, pioneering novelty and altering directions of change is what life does. After the emergence of life itself the second great emergence was eukaryosis. The

³⁷ Alan Guth lays it out here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkV5fJneBzE&t=1870s>. In the toy model Guth presents, however large is your imaginary sphere containing almost all non-interacting particles each moving in some random direction at some random constant velocity, eventually almost all the particles will wend their way outside that sphere.

³⁸ Mary Jane West-Eberhard, “Phenotypic Plasticity and the Origins of Diversity,” *20 Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 249 (1989) 249-250. Cf. Aristotle's observation that poiesis comes via maniacs and shape-shifters: εὐφροῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἔστιν ἢ μανικοῦ: τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσιν. *Poetics* 1455a. See also Simon Callow, “Shape-Shifters,” *The New York Review of Books*, August 18, 2022: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2022/08/18/shape-shifters-the-method-isaac-butler-callow/> (paywalled).

³⁹ William Bateson, *Materials for the Study of Variation* (1894) 6.

⁴⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996) 3.

⁴¹ *The Language Animal* 338-339.

sequelae to that unique event so impress Lane that he exclaims “The void between bacterial and eukaryotic cells is greater than any other in biology;” as his chapter title calls it, “The Deepest Evolutionary Chasm.”⁴²

How so? Briefly, the eukaryotic cell enables gigantism and complex morphological and behavioral variety, the prokaryotic cell does not.⁴³ By Lane’s account the abyss opened when an α -proteobacterium merged with an archaeon (a methanogen): “the first eukaryote was born of the union between two prokaryotes, a fundamentally non-Darwinian process [*Riß, Ruck, Sprung* (Schumpeter); *Einbruch* (Heidegger)]—there was no halfway house.”⁴⁴ The consequent deconstraint has been epochal in its effects:

“Bacteria pump protons across their external cell membrane, and so their size is limited by geometrical constraints: energy production slopes off with a falling surface-area-to-volume ratio. In contrast, eukaryotes internalize energy generation with mitochondria, and this frees them from the constraints facing bacteria. The difference explains why bacteria remained morphologically simple cells, while the eukaryotes were able to grow to tens of thousands of times the size, accumulated thousands of times more DNA, and developed true multicellular complexity; surely the greatest watersheds in all of life.”⁴⁵

Lane writes as Head Yell Leader⁴⁶ of his fellow mitochondriacs (his word):

“mitochondria rule the world;” “they hold the key to the evolution of complexity;” “The acquisition of mitochondria was the pivotal moment in the history of life.” “The answer to the question of life, the universe, and everything is not 42, as Douglas Adams once had it, but an almost equally cryptic shorthand: *mitochondria*.” “If they don’t show us the meaning of life, they do at least make some sense of its shape. And what is meaning in this world, if it doesn’t make sense?”⁴⁷

In our enthusiastic appreciation of mitochondria’s opening new possibility-space let us not forget that neither they nor the world make sense, we do:—before there was any Dasein there was no meaning of life; nor will there be any meaning after Dasein is no more. Human existence is itself a watershed in the history of life in that it opens up the possibility-space of *Bedeutsamkeit*. In Heidegger’s vision, “With the existence of human beings there occurs an irruption [*Einbruch*] into the totality of beings [*in das Ganze des Seienden*], so that now the being in itself first becomes manifest, i.e., as being [*das Seiende an ihm selbst, d.h. als Seiendes*]

⁴² *Power, Sex, Suicide* 41.

⁴³ This is not to diss bacteria. It’s just that their variety of variability is biochemical, not morphological. *Id.* 163.

⁴⁴ *Id.* 166.

⁴⁵ *Id.* 468.

⁴⁶ “Aggies don’t cheer, they yell.” <https://www.tamu.edu/campus-community/traditions/gameday/yell-leaders.html>

⁴⁷ *Power, Sex, Suicide* 464, 26, 25, 476-477.

offenbar wird], in varying degrees, according to various levels of clarity, in various degrees of certainty.”⁴⁸ Human existence alone is sense-making:—interpreting, articulating, world-building. And, as the mitochondrion is for morphological and behavioral complexity, so language is *der Daseinöffner*, the ‘can’-opener of meaning.

HLC *Ge-Stell*izes, HHH increases Shannon entropy. *Das Ge-Stell* is

“the collection and reconfiguration of all entities, through which they are transformed into resources or standing reserve, and stored or placed in such a manner that they are on call and available to be used, combined, and reconfigured in whatever way we see fit . . . an artificial setting-everything-into-place that allows endless forms of combination and reconfiguration.”⁴⁹

Operationalized by this:

“on the normative side, we see two great imperious demands made by HLC thinkers: (1) each term of our language must be carefully introduced by a clear definition, and we must stick to this definition in all subsequent uses of the term (unless we explicitly revise it); and (2) we must stay away from metaphors and tropes in general in our reasoning with the terms so introduced.”⁵⁰

And Frege came not to destroy HLC but to fulfill it. The Frege revolution

“gave theories of depictive power a great new field of expansion. The resources of Fregean logic, including truth-functionality and quantification, make it possible to organize a host of possible sayables as derivations from more basic assertions. . . . This opened a big field for the anti-metaphysical drive of twentieth-century positivists and others who felt themselves to be the heirs of classical empiricism, and hence of the HLC.”⁵¹

The counterpart of this Frege-calculus side of language is in Schneider’s words “the part that engages our capacity for imagination;” “here a ‘leap’ is required of the hearer, a guess at the meaning, whereby she gives free reign [*sic*] to her situational and language-related imagination.”⁵² Laurence Sterne marks the difference by throwing shade at those heads that are

⁴⁸ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (tr. Richard Taft, 5th ed., enlarged 1997) 160. GA 3: 228 : <https://www.beyng.com/pages/de/GA03/GA03.228.html> .

⁴⁹ Mark A. Wrathall, “Inventory (*Ge-Stell*)” in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon* (ed. Mark A. Wrathall 2021) 434.

⁵⁰ *The Language Animal* 129.

⁵¹ *Id.* 120, 121.

⁵² *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning* 176; 160-161.

“stuck so full of rules and compasses, and have that eternal propensity to apply them upon all occasions, that a work of genius had better go to the devil at once, than stand to be prick’d and tortured to death by ‘em.

—And how did *Garrick* speak the soliloquy last night?—Oh, against all rule, my Lord,—most ungrammatically! betwixt the substantive and the adjective, which should agree together in *number, case, and gender*, he made a breach thus,—stopping, as if the point wanted settling;—and betwixt the nominative case, which your lordship knows should govern the verb, he suspended his voice in the epilogue a dozen times, three seconds and three fifths by a stop-watch, my Lord, each time.—Admirable grammarian!—But in suspending his voice—was the sense suspended likewise? Did no expression of attitude or countenance fill up the chasm?—Was the eye silent? Did you narrowly look?—I look’d only at the stop-watch, my Lord.—Excellent observer!

...

I would go fifty miles on foot, for I have not a horse worth riding on, to kiss the hand of that man whose generous heart will give up the reins of his imagination into his author’s hands,—be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore.”⁵³

Imagination, projection, hermeneutic understanding⁵⁴ drive increase in Shannon variability (Shannon entropy), the “variability of the elements within a distribution, how diverse the objects are from each other within the collection.”⁵⁵

For instance, Taylor criticizes excessive reliance on a ‘subtraction story’ of modernism; a story whose logic goes like this: “once we slough off our concern with serving God, or attending to any other transcendent reality, what we’re left with is human good, and that is what modern societies are concerned with.” But this story, he says, “radically under-describes what I’m calling modern humanism.” Because,

“The subtraction story gives too little place to the cultural changes wrought by Western modernity, the way in which it has developed new understandings of the self, its place in society, in space and in time. It fails to see how innovative we have been; its tendency is

⁵³ *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Vol.III, ch. xii (1761).

⁵⁴ “It is one of Wittgenstein’s most important contributions to have directed our attention to the fact that, in natural languages, grammatical forms are continually *projected* into ever new fields of activities. . . . To be able to grasp the meaning of such a projection, the hearer must once again possess a sort of hermeneutic understanding. . . . The meanings of such projections cannot be arrived at by calculation. Instead, projections open linguistic possibilities that lie beyond the scope of any rules that might have been stated up to that point. . . . We can therefore say that the results of the *algebraic* competence displayed in getting the forms right are used in later steps of making new projections, the meanings of which have to be understood *hermeneutically*.” *Wittgenstein’s Later Theory of Meaning* 170-171.

⁵⁵ Gabriele Carcassi, Christine A. Aidala, and Julian Barbour, “Variability as a better characterization of Shannon entropy” (2021): <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1912.02012> .

to see modernity as the liberating of a continuing core of belief and desire from an overlay of metaphysical/religious illusion which distorted and inhibited it.”⁵⁶

There is no Core, Gore. *Das Dasein im Menschen ist nichts Menschliches*;⁵⁷ only protean *Seinkönnen*; a ‘fortunate or unfortunate’ by-product of ~4.2 billion years⁵⁸ of proton-pumping organic chemistry. Ontotheonomy is better seen not as illusion but as one quite robust, aggressive, variant *Seinotype* which emerged with the *Achsenzeit* and thereafter rose to dominance. There are only variants of previous variants, new understandings of the self, and innovations, which Taylor characterizes as ‘spaces’:—”into the new space of ‘la nation’;” “into a new space of freedom and equality;” “a new, less cluttered, more universal and fraternal space.” “Something like this,” Taylor says, “has happened again and again;” so perhaps

“The power which this kind of move seems to have for us as a species could tell us something important about ourselves, if only we could define it more exactly. I don’t pretend to do that here, but it does seem to me that the power can’t be explained just by the negative move, the breaking out of the skein of distinctions and restrictions. . . . The power has to be accounted for partly, even largely, by the positive attraction of the space we are released into: the space of this search for Enlightenment, of salvation, or of submission to God, or the cosmopolis of Gods and humans, to take the four examples above.”⁵⁹

The positive attraction, the motive force of ‘The View to Elsewhere,’ is anticipation. Or as Sapolsky says someplace, the word of power is ‘maybe.’ Thus dopamine in human beings might be more precisely named ‘elpidamine.’ Sapolsky explains that “central to understanding the nature of motivation, as well as its failures,” is that “dopamine is more about anticipation of reward than about reward itself;” “Dopamine is not just about reward anticipation; it fuels the *goal-directed behavior* needed to gain that reward; dopamine ‘binds’ the value of a reward to the resulting work;” “dopamine is not about the happiness of reward. It’s about the happiness of pursuit of reward that has a decent chance of occurring.”⁶⁰ He notes that “anticipatory dopamine release peaks with the greatest uncertainty [50/50] as to whether a reward will occur;” and that in circumstances of such uncertainty, “enhanced anticipatory dopamine release is mostly in the mesocortical rather than mesolimbic pathway, implying that uncertainty is a more cognitively complex state than is anticipation of predictable reward.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ *A Secular Age* 572, 573.

⁵⁷ GA 9:397: <https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=9&pg=397>.

⁵⁸ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-024-02461-1>.

⁵⁹ *A Secular Age* 575-576, 577.

⁶⁰ Robert M. Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (2017) 73, 74.

⁶¹ *Id.* 73.

To a good first approximation human life is all about anticipation.⁶² Sheehan paraphrases a germane passage in *Sein und Zeit*:

“Affect [Befindlichkeit] and aheadness [Verstehen]. As two sides of the same coin, affect and aheadness are ex-sistentials that characterize how we are open and involved in meaning. In their unity they complement one another. As affect I ‘see’ the possibilities in terms of which I ex-sist; and as ahead and opening up those possibilities, I am affected by them. . . . the field of intelligibility is ex-sistence as thrown and projective” “I always understand things in terms of their possibilities (their possible meanings) because my aheadness is a priori projective. . . . the ex-sistence into which I am thrown is itself *projective* [Und als geworfenes ist das Dasein in die Seinsart des Entwerfens geworfen]. . . . as a priori projected [entworfen], I am always projecting [entwerfend].”⁶³

A vignette from *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) illustrates affective aheadness, the positive attraction of spaces we are released into, elpidaminergia. Mr. Edward W. A. Pointsman, F.R.C.S., former student of a former student of Pavlov’s, yearns for “an exit out of the orthodox-Pavlovian,” a breakthrough that will take him to Sweden and The Prize. Women find him creepy and avoid him; “they run away uttering screams only they, and he, can hear. Oh but how he’d like someday to give them something *really to scream about.*” Pointsman is self-conditioned: “Conditioned stimulus = x. Conditioned response = hardon whenever x is present, stroking is no longer necessary, all you need is that x;” and is in “paradoxical phase, when weak stimuli get strong responses.” Hence, at the mere passing thought of giving them something really to scream about (x, his fantasized winning the Nobel for Medicine),

“Here’s an erection stirring, he’ll masturbate himself to sleep again tonight. A joyless constant, an institution in his life. But goading him, just before the bright peak, what images will come whirling in? Why, the turrets and blue waters, the sails and churchtops of Stockholm—the yellow telegram, the face of a tall, cognizant, and beautiful woman turned to watch him as he passes in the ceremonial limousine, a woman who will later, hardly by chance, visit him in his suite at the Grand Hotel . . . it’s not *all* ruby nipples and black lace cami-knickers, you know.”

Projectively stepping from the foregoing then, *Entwurf* is the boner of *Existenz*.

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⁶² “No warthog restricts calories to look good in a bathing suit next summer. No gerbil works hard at school to get good SAT scores to get into a good college to get into a good grad school to get a good job to get into a good nursing home.” *Id.* 76.

⁶³ Being and Time *Paraphrased and Annotated* 185, 182.