

# *Sorge* or *Selbstbewußtsein*? Heidegger and Korsgaard on the Sources of Normativity

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## 1. Existential Kantians: Heidegger and Korsgaard

In a recent criticism of Christine Korsgaard, Robert Pippin remarks that a central feature of post-Kantian German thought is the 'exclusively practical, non-metaphysical status' it attributes to subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> The transcendental tradition—represented here by Korsgaard's Kant-inspired theory—rejects the metaphysical conception of the subject as a substance with certain fixed properties, arguing instead that subjectivity is an achievement, something which I can succeed or fail at being. It is easy to see that Heidegger also belongs to this tradition, at least in *Being and Time*. There we read that 'the "essence" of [Dasein] lies in its "to be"' and that Dasein is such that 'in its very being that being is an *issue* for it' (Heidegger 1962: 67, 32; 1953: 42, 12). For Korsgaard this non-metaphysical conception of subjectivity underlies an account of normativity, an explanation of how standards—including the standards that measure success or failure at being a subject—can *bind* you, can provide you with reasons for acting in some ways and with obligations that forbid you from acting in others (Korsgaard 1996: 101). Her argument is complicated, but it turns on characterizing subjectivity as self-consciousness: normative concepts do not arise as answers to theoretical questions; rather they exist 'because human beings have normative problems. And we have normative problems because we are self-conscious rational animals, capable of reflection about what we ought to believe and do' (Korsgaard 1996: 46).<sup>2</sup> Self-consciousness thus gives rise to the normative, and the normative, 'obligation . . . makes us human' (Korsgaard 1996: 5).

A similar stance toward normativity can be found in Heidegger. Truth, by all accounts, is a normative notion, a standard for the evaluation of the success or failure of propositions. And Heidegger famously argues that "'[t]here is" truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is. . . . Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more' (Heidegger 1962: 269; 1953: 226). This is not because 'there were no such entities' as are pointed out in true assertions; rather, it is because such entities could not have had the status of *norms*, since that status depends on a condition that did not obtain, namely, Dasein's ability to 'bind itself' to entities, be 'beholden' to them.<sup>3</sup> More generally, the concept of being (*Sein*) in Heidegger exhibits a normative structure, and being cannot be divorced from Dasein's understanding of being (*Seinsverständnis*): '[O]nly so long as Dasein *is* (that is, only so long as an understanding of being is ontically possible), "is there" being' (Heidegger 1962:

255; 1953: 212). This does not mean that entities depend on Dasein. But their 'being'—that is, any characterization of them *as* something—is possible only if Dasein holds them up to constitutive standards, or satisfaction conditions, for being the things they are. 'Understanding of being' just names our orientation toward these standards, or norms, such that we let them count for us (the entity cannot do so for itself), and in so doing 'being' or 'intra-worldliness' 'devolves' on entities.<sup>4</sup> Being—the norm for beings—arises because of our nature (understanding of being), and the reasons and obligations that we thereby incur are 'what make us human'.

In spite of this convergence between Heidegger and Korsgaard—one that is hardly surprising, given their mutual reference point in Kant's philosophy and the fact that Korsgaard admits to developing an 'existential' variant of it (Korsgaard 1996: 237)—there is a fundamental difference. Heidegger's account of why we can and must act in light of norms makes no reference to self-consciousness. Indeed, the whole thrust of his text is to break with that rationalistic tradition and provide an ontology of Dasein in terms of what he calls 'care' (*Sorge*). In contrast to Hegel and Kant, Heidegger does not derive Dasein's understanding of being (its orientation toward the normative) from its ability to reflect on itself. Indeed, he rejects the model of mindedness that begins with consciousness, or the mental, as a repository of first-order intentional states that, in addition, have the capacity to become objects for second-order, or reflective, intentions. Instead, our openness to the world is conceived as a tripartite 'care'-structure. This consists, first, in the affective dimension of our being, 'disposition' (*Befindlichkeit*). It is because we are always disposed toward the world in certain ways that things can matter to us; and we are disposed toward the world in certain ways because we are *exposed* to it—'thrown', in Heidegger's language. It belongs to us, as being-in-the-world, as our 'facticity', as what we 'have to be'. Second, the care-structure involves our practical skills and abilities, which Heidegger calls 'understanding' (*Verstehen*), in the sense of know-how. Thanks to our exercise of skills the 'world' has the character of a teleological context of significance in which particular things can show up *as* this or that, as 'for' something or other. This openness to possibilities is, for Heidegger, the root meaning of 'transcendence', or 'freedom', and it belongs together essentially with the kind of affective significance characteristic of our facticity. Finally, the third aspect of the care-structure, 'discourse' (*Rede*), is that thanks to which the world disclosed through facticity and transcendence is not a *forum internum* but a shared, publicly articulated, space of meaning.

Given the previously noted proximity of Heidegger and Korsgaard, then, the question arises: does this ontology of care make any real philosophical difference? Why should we prefer one to the other? The present essay takes up this question. The strategy is to motivate a new look at Heidegger in this context by showing that Korsgaard's reliance on the concept of self-consciousness to explain the origin and nature of the normative leads to logical aporias and phenomenological distortions. Specifically, three problems arise: 1) an equivocation in Korsgaard's attempt to trace the source of normativity to the structure of

self-consciousness; 2) an aporia in her conception of humanity arising from this equivocation; and 3) a rationalistic distortion in her phenomenology of action necessitated by the aporia. My primary aim is to lay out the nature, source, and interconnection of these problems. In each case I will also suggest how Heidegger's ontology of care may provide a better account of the very phenomena upon which Korsgaard draws. While a detailed presentation of Heidegger's position on the sources of normativity is beyond the scope of this paper, enough can be said, I hope, to indicate the fruitfulness of further dialogue between these two 'existential Kantians'.

## 2. Equivocation in the Concept of Self-Consciousness

Let us begin by considering the general shape of Korsgaard's account of how normativity attaches to what she calls 'practical identity'. This account has much in common with Heidegger's phenomenology of everyday being-in-the-world, yet it is already significant that Korsgaard, though not Heidegger, introduces practical identity as a modification of *animal* agency.

To be an agent, on Korsgaard's view, one's movements must belong to an action—that is, to 'an essentially intelligible object that *embodies* a reason' like a sentence embodies a thought.<sup>5</sup> The intelligibility of action arises from two conditions: its teleological character and its expressive character. Put otherwise, an entity counts as an agent if its movements are 'efficacious'—that is, oriented toward a goal, done for the sake of a goal—and 'autonomous'—that is, expressive of what is 'one's own' and in that sense 'self-determined' (Korsgaard 2002b: 4–5). Animals count as agents because they fulfill both conditions. Animals are efficacious because they act for an end. They do not merely respond differentially to their environment, but, Korsgaard claims, 'they respond to representations or conceptions of their environment'; they represent things 'as dinner' or 'as danger' and thus as 'to be eaten' or 'to be avoided' (Korsgaard 2002b: 12). We attribute intentional content (and so efficacy) to animal movements, then, not because we attribute full-blown intentions to them, but because we understand such movements in light of the representation of the world we attribute to them. What allows us to attribute these representations, in turn, 'is not the presence of an accompanying thought, but rather appeal to the [animal's] form and function' (Korsgaard 2002b: 15–16).<sup>6</sup> And it is precisely the kind of form and function that we ascribe to an animal—namely, a 'self-maintaining form' and a 'function of self-maintenance' (Korsgaard 2002b: 16)—that permits us to see it as fulfilling the second condition for agency: autonomy. Because its movements arise from its function of self-maintenance, we can say that an insect foraging on a leaf is 'looking for something to eat'; and in so doing we understand that movement as expressive of its whole being, as 'determined' by its 'self' and so 'autonomous'.

The general term for what allows us to assign certain movements to an animal as its own is *instinct* (Korsgaard 2002b: 20). Instinct is whatever belongs to the 'self-maintaining form' of the animal, and it provides the 'principles that govern

its reactions to its perceptions'. Instincts determine 'what it does in response to what, what it does for the sake of what' (Korsgaard 2002b: 21), but because they arise from the animal's self-maintaining form they are not merely something causally working 'in' the animal; rather, they are the animal 'itself' and movements determined by them are, to that extent, autonomous, *self-determined*.

Human agency, too, involves the principles of autonomy and efficacy, but here Korsgaard makes a distinction that might seem to render the whole approach through animal agency otiose, for she argues that 'there are actually two senses of autonomy or self-determination'. The first, characteristic of animals, is 'to be governed by the principles of your own causality' (i.e. by instinct); the second, characteristic of human agents, is 'to *choose* the principles that are definitive of your will' (Korsgaard 2002b: 26). What does it mean to choose the principles that determine my will? What will replace instinct as that which determines—that is, provides reasons for—what I do in response to what, what I do for the sake of what? *Practical identity* provides the answer.

Korsgaard defines practical identity as a 'conception of one's identity', a 'description under which you value yourself' and find life worth living (Korsgaard 1996: 101).<sup>7</sup> Such conceptions are as various as the roles that human beings can occupy: teacher, lover, father, citizen, dog-person, epicure, and so on. Such identities are practical because they are not primarily objects for theoretical contemplation, nor merely social roles that are attributed to us in a third-person way, but are expressed in what we do. For most people, as Korsgaard points out, their practical identity is a 'jumble' of such conceptions, which often compete and conflict with one another. But insofar as you 'value' yourself under a conception you can be said to 'identify' with it and so 'constitute' yourself in its image (Korsgaard 1996: 101). In doing so, you provide yourself with reasons to act in certain ways; practical identity becomes the principle of choice that replaces animal instinct.

Human autonomy involves choosing one's principles, and so arises the consciousness of normativity: I must now act not only in accord with norms but also *in light* of them; I must act for a *reason*, where 'reason' does not refer to an external cause but to 'a kind of reflective success', something that I can endorse from the first-person point of view: a 'law' I give myself (Korsgaard 1996: 93). Now had I no practical identity—no conception under which I value myself—my choice could get no purchase on reasons; I would have no principle on which to act and so would be incapable of acting at all (Korsgaard 1996: 123). By identifying with a practical identity I gain a reason, and practical identities become normative for me to the extent that I identify with them. Because I am a teacher I have a reason to choose to prepare my lecture rather than take a walk in the park, and I have an obligation not to miss class or neglect my paper grading. This is because practical identities involve standards of success or failure. If I am to be a teacher I must satisfy the conditions for being one, conditions that become normative for me *because* I identify with the role, because it expresses 'me'.

Heidegger's account of everyday being-in-the-world shares many features with Korsgaard's theory of practical identity. First, like Korsgaard, Heidegger

rejects the attempt to define the self in terms of psychological attributes—the flow of *Erlebnisse*—turning instead to the first-person experience of agency.<sup>8</sup> Dasein finds itself in its *practices*, and Heidegger's phenomenology of agency confirms Korsgaard's criteria: practices are both efficacious and autonomous. To begin with, Heidegger notes that our everyday being-in-the-world is not a matter of registering environmental factors through perception and then calculating what can be done with them; rather my engaged coping with things is primary—things present themselves to me as governed by 'in-order-to' relations, and the environment in which practical life takes place is essentially a 'totality of involvements' (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) or network of such in-order-to relations (Heidegger 1962: 116–18; 1953: 84–85). Thus, Dasein's dealings with the world are not mechanical but teleological, that is, efficacious. Further, such efficacy is not automatic but involves a kind of 'sight', which Heidegger calls 'circumspection' (*Umsicht*) (Heidegger 1962: 98; 1953: 69). Because circumspection is not a consciously formulated intention, it may be likened to what Korsgaard called the animal's representation of its environment, even though Heidegger would not describe it as a 'representation'. Finally, Dasein's dealings are also autonomous, since their principles are determined by what belongs to the self.

This last aspect of practice turns on the dimension of the care-structure Heidegger called 'understanding' or know-how. The in-order-to relations that characterize the significance of things encountered in practical dealings cannot be understood unless they are anchored in something that establishes what is being done for what—a 'principle', as Korsgaard says. As Heidegger puts this point, 'the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a "towards-which" in which there is *no* further involvement'—that is, to a 'for-the-sake-of-which' (*Worumwillen*). And, he continues, 'the "for-the-sake-of" always pertains to the being of Dasein, for which, in its being, that very being is essentially an issue' (Heidegger 1962: 117; 1953: 84). The *Worumwillen* is not itself another aim or goal but a possible way of being a self that constitutes the 'self-determining' principle essential to action. I hammer nails in order to secure boards, but such action always has a self-referential dimension as well: I am *trying* to be a carpenter; being one (practically) is an *issue* for me. When I try to exercise the skills that define that way to be, try to live up to the demands of the job, I act 'for the sake of' a possibility of my own being, and only so can things present themselves to me in light of *their* possibilities. (Heidegger 1962: 116; 1953: 84).

Now in animals, as we saw, this principle or self-referential aspect is provided by instinct, and since Heidegger describes everyday Dasein as 'absorbed' in the world—not as a reflective chooser but as someone engaged in coping with the environment—one might imagine that the for-the-sake-of belongs to the teleological structure of animal action. But this would be wrong. Instead, the for-the-sake-of corresponds to practical identity. First, though the skills and know-how I exercise do involve bodily capacities, my bodily nature underdetermines them. The norms that give shape to them belong first of all to the social context in which I find myself. My 'possibilities for being' are not instincts but roles and socially recognized practices into which I have been born and according to the

norms of which I must act if I am to be recognized as acting at all. So deeply do these socially recognized practices inhere in my everyday way of being that Heidegger can say that ordinarily the actor is not 'I myself' but 'the one' (*das Man*): in being for the sake of a given possibility (for instance, a carpenter), I do so as 'one' does. Like Wittgenstein, Heidegger recognizes that this anonymity and typicality is essential to the normative character of the roles and practices themselves: 'The "one" itself prescribes that way of interpreting the world and *being-in-the-world* which lies closest. Dasein is for the sake of the "one" in an everyday manner' (Heidegger 1962: 167; 1953: 129; my emphasis).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, though *das Man* prescribes these identities, actions done in accord with them are still self-determined since the 'one-self' is not someone *other* than me but I myself in my everyday mode (Heidegger 1962: 167; 1953: 129). Thus, as the for-the-sake-of, I identify with and express a public, normatively structured, possibility for being and so provide myself with reasons to act.

Despite the similarities between Korsgaard on practical identity and Heidegger on the for-the-sake-of, however, their views are very different. This becomes evident if we consider why it is, according to Korsgaard, that we need practical identities.

We need practical identities because 'our reflective nature' (Korsgaard 1996: 96), whereby we become aware of the 'workings of incentives within us, . . . sets us a problem that other animals do not have' (Korsgaard 2002c: 7). Where the animal's incentive (a 'motivationally loaded representation of the object') is governed by the principle of instinct, our self-conscious nature means that we can 'distance ourselves from [incentives] and call them into question' (Korsgaard 2002c: 7). And this, in turn, means that I must *decide* whether to act on them or not. It is in this situation of decision, 'in the space of reflective distance, in the internal world created by self-consciousness, that reason is born' (Korsgaard 2002c: 8; 1996: 93, 96). Because I am aware of the workings of incentive within me I must ask whether it really gives me a reason to act in a certain way. On what principle do I decide this question? The source of what counts as a reason is my practical identity. Identifying with it, its norms provide me with the principles that, in lieu of instinct, tell me 'what [is] an appropriate response to what, what makes what worth doing, what the situation calls for' (Korsgaard 2002c: 7).

On Korsgaard's account, then, our 'self-conscious nature' is the source of the normative space in which we operate as 'humans'. This is a powerful account, but the concept of self-consciousness it invokes suffers from an equivocation. On the one hand, self-consciousness is understood to be a mode of *self-awareness*, an essential 'structure of our minds that makes thoughtfulness possible'. On the other hand, this structure is defined in terms of *reflection*: 'The human mind is self-conscious in the sense that it is essentially reflective', where reflection is understood as our ability 'to turn our attention onto our perceptions and desires themselves' (Korsgaard 1996: 92). Reflection, Korsgaard goes on to say, is a specific higher-order act that 'reifies' our states into 'a kind of mental item' or content of consciousness (Korsgaard 2002c: 15). However, the attempt to explain the *essentially* self-aware structure of our minds by appeal to a specific mental act

leads to an infinite regress.<sup>10</sup> There is thus a fundamental equivocation in Korsgaard's conception of self-consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

Before exploring the problems to which this leads, let us recall how Heidegger handles the same issue. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he admits that the concept of self-consciousness as applied to Dasein is 'correct'. 'Formally, it is unassailable to speak of the ego as consciousness-of-something that is at the same time conscious of itself' (Heidegger 1982: 158–59). But Heidegger is keenly aware that the sort of self-awareness we have in mind when we speak 'formally' in this way cannot be glossed with the concept of reflection: 'The self is there for the Dasein itself without reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection'. For Heidegger, this sort of self-awareness is built in to the very structure of practical identities; it belongs to the for-the-sake-of that governs Dasein's concerned engagement in the world: 'The Dasein does not need a special kind of observation . . . in order to have the self; rather, as the Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world, its own self is reflected to it from things' (Heidegger 1982: 159). I am constantly self-aware because I discover myself in what I do: I am aware of myself 'as' a carpenter, father, or teacher because the things that surround me show me the face that they show to one who acts as a carpenter, father, or teacher does. And because I am never without some practical identity, I am always self-aware in one way or another. The concept of reflection as a specific second-order intention does have a role to play in Heidegger's account—for instance, in the theoretical attempt to describe my mental states, or in the case of explicit deliberation—but this should not be confused with the kind of self-awareness, or self-relatedness, that characterizes Dasein as such.

Korsgaard's reliance on the concept of reflection to explain our 'self-conscious nature' undermines the argument that is meant to establish self-consciousness as the source of reason and normativity. Through reflection I 'distance' myself from my incentives, and I am thereby putatively 'banished from a world that is teleologically ordered' (Korsgaard 2002c: 4). Reflection cuts me off from the authority of my animal instincts and the principles they provide for my actions, forcing me to adopt a practical identity that can supply me with reasons. But why should reflective distancing have this result? If I reify my states into mental items I do stand at a kind of distance from them, but not one that would necessarily undermine their authority. Why should the mere act of objectifying my incentive have the effect of forcing me to find some reason, other than my animal instinct, for acting on it? Why don't I simply go on my animal way as before, only now conscious of the laws of my nature working within me? Thomas Nagel posed a similar question to Korsgaard: 'Why isn't the reflective individual just someone with more information . . . ? How do reasons, laws, and universality get a foothold here' (Korsgaard 1996: 201)? Korsgaard believes she has an answer, since for her, to reflect on my incentives is already to 'call them into question' (Korsgaard 1996: 93; 2002c: 7). But this does not follow. To objectify something might enable me to call it into question, but it is not itself such a questioning. If reflection is supposed to explain how I have entered into the normative such that

I am *banished* from the teleological order, one must explain why *all* objectification is a calling into question. This Korsgaard's ontology does not have the resources to do. All it provides is animal instincts and their reflective distancing. If calling my animal nature into question is supposed to yield the kind of sea-change that submits my entire being to the normative problem, such questioning must be there at the 'pre-reflective' level of self-awareness as such; it cannot be brought in by some particular second-order intention. On this point Heidegger's ontology of care—his view of Dasein as a being in whose being that very being is at issue—has a distinct advantage.<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger, too, identifies a kind of distancing as a condition for being the sort of creature who can be bound by norms, but this is neither a matter of self-objectification nor a passage from an instinctual condition to some other. Rather, the distancing that matters is that whereby my absorption in everyday practices—structured by the practical identities that inform my particular social and historical world and which I inhabit in the quasi-anonymous way that characterizes 'the one'—breaks down altogether. This occurs, according to Heidegger, in moods such as *Angst*, where I find that I can no longer act at all, no longer press forward smoothly into practical possibilities for being, and I confront myself as 'pure Dasein', that is, as 'being-free for the freedom of choosing [myself] and taking hold of [myself]' (Heidegger 1962: 232; 1953: 188). This is not the sort of reflective distancing that takes place in deliberation, where my identification with a given practical identity can provide me with reasons for doing this rather than that. It lies deeper, revealing me as one who is always essentially 'in question', at issue, and so as one who must 'take over being a ground' (Heidegger 1962: 331; 1953: 285).

To take over being a ground is not to pass from some pre-normative ontological condition to one governed by norms; rather, it is to uncover, phenomenologically, the condition that enables me to act not only in conformity to norms (as in everyday coping) but also *in light of* them—i.e. to be responsible, 'beholden' to normative constraints and so offer reasons (grounds) for what I do.<sup>13</sup> What Korsgaard tries to grasp as the passage from mere instinct to genuine consciousness of norms can be understood, in Heidegger's ontology of care, as an aspect of the facticity of my being 'thrown' into a world. But such facticity is not put in question for the first time only in the distancing that takes place in *Angst*; it is *always already* in question since it is bound up, in the unity of the care-structure, with the for-the-sake-of, with the issue of who I am to be, my 'trying to be' a father, professor, and so on. The kind of distancing Heidegger appeals to, then, does not explain how the normative emerges from the non-normative but identifies a mode of being—freedom, authenticity—without which beholdenness to norms would not be possible. To those who want a naturalistic explanation of normativity, this may seem like a loss. But the fact that Korsgaard's explanation goes through only by means of an equivocation should raise doubts about such naturalizing ambitions. Further reasons for doubt can be gleaned from the aporia that arises, thanks to that very equivocation, in Korsgaard's account of the person.

### 3. An Aporia in Korsgaard's Account of the Person

Korsgaard's quarry is finally not simply an account of the norms that make us good fathers, teachers, or friends, but of moral norms, those that constitute the 'rules for being good at being a person' (Korsgaard 2002a: 18). She argues that, were there no such norms, all other normativity would be groundless (Korsgaard 1996: 113). Because all my practical identities are contingent there is no sense in which I *must* value myself under their description, and thus they are, in a certain sense, not really binding on me. Moral norms, in contrast, would be norms that bind me come what may. Korsgaard offers a transcendental argument from the possibility of rational action to show that there are such norms. In this, the concept of person—of one's 'humanity' as such—plays a crucial role. Let us review the argument.

Action requires that you identify yourself with a particular practical identity, for if you do not, 'you will lose your grip on yourself as having any reason to do one thing rather than another'. *This* reason, however—that you will have no reason 'to live and act at all'—does not stem from your practical identity, but 'from your humanity itself'. Hence the reason that your practical identity provides you to act in a certain way *is* a reason only 'if you treat your humanity as a practical, normative form of identity, that is, if you value yourself as a human being' (Korsgaard 1996: 121). Thus, if there are moral norms—that is, if there are ways of acting that our 'humanity' as such 'requires' (Korsgaard 1996: 123)—we are bound by them if we are bound by *any* contingent practical identity.<sup>14</sup> Our identity as human beings itself provides reasons to act in one way rather than another.

I do not wish to challenge this argument directly. The claim that the normativity of practical identities has its roots in an ontological structure that is not a contingent practical identity seems largely correct. In Heidegger, for instance, one finds that the reasons for acting provided by 'the one'—reasons embedded in anonymous roles and typified practices that are historically contingent and particular—derive their normative force from the fact that Dasein is not identical to any of them but *can* 'make them its own' in authentic choice, *can* make them *its* reasons by taking over being a ground. If authenticity were not a possibility for Dasein, inauthenticity would not be one either. But authenticity is not itself some particular practical identity; it is, rather, a way of taking up whatever practical identities one has. Nevertheless, though Heidegger's position shares something deep with Korsgaard's, the latter's appeal to the concepts of 'humanity' and 'person' to make her case leads to an aporia, a knot in our understanding of just what it can mean to identify with, or value, our humanity as such.

The problem arises because Korsgaard defines the human being as a 'reflective animal who needs reasons to act and to live' (Korsgaard 1996: 121). It is this identity, our humanity, which is supposed to provide 'rules for being good at being a person' (Korsgaard 2002a: 18). Why is this a problem? If we note that Korsgaard's position is a version of personalistic ontology in the manner of

Husserl or Scheler—who approach the human being not in psychological terms (as the subject of ‘experiences’) but as it shows itself ‘actively involved in history’, as ‘the performer of acts’<sup>15</sup>—we can derive the beginning of an answer from Heidegger’s criticism of these phenomenological versions of personalism.

First, if one asks ‘how human Dasein is *given* in specifically personal experiences’ (Heidegger 1985: 117)—that is, how the agent shows itself in its agency—it turns out that personalistic theories distort the phenomenology of agency. This is because they do not achieve a genuine ‘idea of the whole’ being of the agent (as Heidegger himself tries to do with the care-structure) but grasp it instead as a ‘multi-layered thing of the world’ (Heidegger 1985: 125). Personalistic anthropology remains tied to the traditional characterization of human being as rational animal, a characterization in which both elements—animality and rationality—remain only externally related to one another, additively composed. Heidegger argues that such a compositional conception ‘serves to obstruct the question of the actual being of the acts, the being of the intentional’ (Heidegger 1985: 123). In his discussion of Kant’s notion of the *personalitas moralis* in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger indicates two such areas of obstruction.

First, he argues that Kant’s multi-layered, merely conjunctive characterization of the agent means that the ‘I’ of the ‘I act’ is determined ‘wholly intellectualistically’ (Heidegger 1982: 141f). This sounds odd until one remembers that for Kant the identity of the agent is approached from the standpoint of reflective deliberation, which Korsgaard aptly describes as follows: ‘When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above all your desires, something that is *you* and that *chooses* which one to act on’.<sup>16</sup> Second, Heidegger claims that Kant’s ontology of the person cannot do justice to the agent’s facticity. On the multi-layered view, facticity appears not as an original determination of the human being but simply as ‘nature’, borrowed from an ontology of the present-at-hand (Heidegger 1982: 153).

Korsgaard’s idea of the person as animal-plus-reflection obviously exhibits the same multi-layered, merely additive, structure that Heidegger criticizes in personalism. However, this is worrisome only if it produces serious problems for her theory. It seems that there are such problems, and that they are the very ones Heidegger identified in Kant. First, Korsgaard cannot do justice to facticity, since her concept of animality oscillates between being part of one’s humanity and being something that stands over against it. Second, Korsgaard determines the ego of the ‘I act’ wholly intellectualistically—that is, as it appears in the standpoint of deliberation. But this produces a rationalistic distortion of the phenomenology of agency. I will treat the first problem in the remainder of this section and shall devote the paper’s concluding section to the second.

On Korsgaard’s view, the task of the agent is to ‘unify’ itself, something it can do only if it acts in accord with the norms inherent in its humanity. The problem is that humanity, as Korsgaard defines it, is an internally riven concept, an additive composition of animality-plus-reflection in which reflection, as we have seen, is defined as a *break* with animality. Several problems follow.

First, self-unification is said to come about only if, in choosing any practical identity, I also commit to my identity as human: 'Since you cannot act without reasons, and since your humanity is the source of your reasons, you must value your own humanity if you are to act at all' (Korsgaard 1996: 123). This is to treat humanity itself as a kind of practical identity. But my humanity cannot be the source of reasons in the way that a practical identity is—that is, by providing norms that determine a particular way of getting on in the world. Being human in *this* sense is not something I can choose to be, not something, therefore, which I can value or identify with. Korsgaard acknowledges that '[t]he necessity of choosing and acting is not causal, logical, or rational necessity. It is our *plight*: the simple inexorable fact of the human condition' (Korsgaard 2002a: 2). But this means that it really makes no sense to speak of constitutive rules or standards here. As she admits, 'choosing not to act makes not acting a kind of action, makes it something that you do' (Korsgaard 2002a: 1), and so I cannot succeed or fail at being human in this sense. I am it, willy-nilly. In contrast, practical identities such as being a father *do* involve satisfaction conditions that I can fail to instantiate, and so they can give me reasons to do what I do: because I am a father I have a reason to take time off work to coach my son's little league team, and so on. Though there is no such thing as reasons unless there is humanity—and so humanity is the 'source' of my reasons in that transcendental sense—humanity as the 'plight' of having to choose is not by itself the source of any *special* reasons.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, Heidegger's ontology of care also conceives selfhood as an unavoidable task of self-unification, a challenge that is met in the existential stance he calls 'anticipatory resoluteness': 'Anticipatory resoluteness . . . includes an authentic potentiality-for-being-a-whole' (Heidegger 1962: 365; 1953: 317). As this citation suggests, existential wholeness, or 'self-constancy' (*Selbstständigkeit*, Heidegger 1962: 369; 1953: 322), also makes reference to a norm—namely, 'authenticity' (*Eigentlichkeit*). Though this is not a moral norm, it is nevertheless one that attaches to my being as such, my 'humanity' in Korsgaard's terms. But if that is so, will not Heidegger's position be subject to the objection just leveled at Korsgaard, namely, that an aspect of my being that I cannot help but be—i.e. being an issue for myself, perpetually oriented toward the wholeness of my identity—cannot really be thought as responsive to norms at all? Doesn't the concept of care, like that of humanity, indicate something I cannot help but be, such that 'valuing' my own care-structure could never yield a *special* set of reasons, an unconditional obligation to be authentic, that I could succeed or fail at instantiating?

Heidegger's position here is indeed quite close to Korsgaard's, but there is a crucial difference. Korsgaard's concept of humanity as the plight of having to choose must entail constitutive standards that are both *distinct* from those involved in practical identities and provide reasons that can *compete* with those provided by practical identities. Only so can morality help me choose between practical identities or 'test' the reasons to which they give rise. Heidegger's concept of care, in contrast, does not designate something I could value *in addition* to what I find valuable in my concrete practical identities—something

like my 'capacity to choose' as such. Care is simply the structure of being an issue for myself. This structure admits of normative success or failure—of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'—only to the extent that these norms govern the *way* I live my concrete practical identities, the way I take them up: either as 'my own', as chosen by me 'transparently' in anticipatory resoluteness (authenticity), or else as 'one' does, simply going along with those ways of being in which I find myself, as though I were not responsible for them (inauthenticity). Thus, appeal to authenticity cannot help me choose between practical identities; nor is there any sense in which fulfilling the obligations imposed by my practical identities requires that I do so authentically. I have no unconditional obligation to be authentic. Hence, though authenticity designates a certain constitutive standard for existing, it is not one that can supply reasons that could compete with the reasons that derive from my practical identities. It is just the distinction between following those reasons transparently and following them self-forgetfully, as though they were quasi-natural 'givens'.

Even if one's humanity could be treated as a kind of practical identity, however, Korsgaard's account of the person would still be unable to supply the necessary conditions for unification of oneself as an agent, since her concept of person is itself internally bifurcated. As animal-*plus*-reflection, humanity is an unstable notion in which the 'plus' oscillates between being a mark of identity and a mark of irrecoverable breach. Korsgaard's considered view seems to be that one's animal nature is seamlessly absorbed into the humanity that is to provide the rules for agent self-unification, but her formulations often betray a revealing tension. For instance, she claims that '[it] is not just as human, but considered as sensible, considered as animal, that you value yourself and are your own end' (Korsgaard 1996: 152). If 'animal' were already *part* of the concept of the person, however, such a contrast between the human and the sensible would make no sense. Indeed, the sentence that precedes the one just quoted is even more revealing: '[Y]our animal nature is a fundamental form of identity, on which the normativity of your human identity, your moral identity, depends' (Korsgaard 1996: 152). One already has trouble here with the idea that the normativity of one's human identity *depends* on one's animal identity, for earlier the claim was that normativity arose precisely as a *break* with the teleological imperatives of one's animal nature. What sort of dependence, then, can be meant? Heidegger's ontology of care sees such dependence as the way in which what initially belongs to me 'anonymously' thanks to my absorption in *das Man*—the practical identities embedded in the social practices in which I continuously engage, together with the reasons to which they give rise—serves as the ground that I make 'my own' through authentic choice. Thus it does not posit two identities. If one does posit a distinction between animal and human identity, as Korsgaard does, human identity can only be construed as *reflection itself*, which is defined as a break with animal identity.

By construing sensibility as teleological, instinctual animality Korsgaard falls into a dilemma: 'humanity' cannot be the name for its integration under the regime of reflection because reflection is precisely what keeps it from functioning

in its proper way, namely, as teleological and instinctual. There is no possibility for unifying the self in this model. Animality cannot be part of my humanity; yet it must be if the agent is to be unified as a person. Thus Korsgaard's concept of the person suffers from the same problem Heidegger found in Kant: an erroneous substitution of 'nature' for facticity undermines her account of the source of the normative.<sup>18</sup> Without an ontology of care, in which sensibility already belongs to normatively structured being-in-the-world, a stand-off between the reflective and the animal parts of my being is inevitable; I cannot be unified.

It is clear, then, that Korsgaard's normative concept of humanity is in fact wholly governed by the concept of reflection, by the *deliberating* agent 'distanced' from its animal identity. But this provokes the second problem that Heidegger identified in Kant's personalism, for the agent is here conceived entirely 'intellectualistically'. This finally prevents Korsgaard from being able to give a coherent account of non-deliberated action. Either it must be seen as a reversion to mere animal instinct, or the structure of deliberation must be smuggled back into it. In opting for the latter, Korsgaard rationalistically distorts the phenomenology of such action.

#### 4. Distortions in the Phenomenology of Action

According to Korsgaard, our conception of ourselves as agents is derived from the standpoint of reflective deliberation. In choosing, I am governed by a practical identity that provides me with reasons to act, and in so acting I constitute myself. It is from the practical point of view, then, that the idea of the 'whole person' makes sense; what is most 'my own' belongs to my practical identity. In contrast, my psychology—my feelings, beliefs, and desires considered as experiences—merely provides material for choice and decision. As Korsgaard (1996b: 379) puts it, 'beliefs and desires you have actively arrived at are more truly your own than those that have simply arisen in you'. Psychology cannot explain the agent. This is because '[t]he reflective mind cannot settle for a perception and a desire, not just as such. It needs a *reason*. Otherwise, at least as long as it reflects, it cannot commit itself or go forward' (Korsgaard 1996: 93). What are we to say, then, about those instances when the agent does *not* reflect? Is the practical point of view equivalent to the standpoint of reflective deliberation? What account can be given of pre-reflective or non-deliberated action?

It might appear that there can be no non-deliberated action. Our movements can be seen to lie on a continuum from 'automatic acts' like salivating at the sight of food all the way to full-blown actions, but a 'movement will not be an action unless it is attributable to you—to you as a whole unified being—rather than merely to something in you. And the task of deliberation is to determine what you—you as a whole unified being—are going to do' (Korsgaard 2002c: 19). If this is right, it might seem that action in which I do not reflect on what I am doing—let us call it 'mindless coping'<sup>19</sup>—is not really action, attributable not to me 'as a whole unified being' but to 'something in me': my psychology, my

experiences, my perceptions and desires. This would be an extremely odd view, however, since by far the majority of our practical life is spent in such mindless coping. So what account of such action does Korsgaard provide? What account of the 'whole human being' can she give of an agent immersed in the flow of life? Here she has only two ways to go. Either she must claim that such action is a function of our animal identity, or else she must import the structure of reflective deliberation back into mindless coping.

The first option soon collapses. A movement belongs to an action if it is attributable to an agent as 'her own', as 'self-determined' (Korsgaard 2002b: 6). Self-determination is either instinctual or reflective. Unreflective action, then, must be instinctual. But surely one cannot say that mindless coping expresses the animal teleology that would have governed me were I not a self-conscious being. When I gear unreflectively into the world, going about my daily tasks, do I really recover the Edenic garden of nature? Suppose I am simply drawn to do a kind act for my wife—'drawn by affection' as we would say. Are we to imagine that it is not I, but my instinctual animal identity, that acts in this case? We cannot appeal to just *any* aspect of my psychology, since Korsgaard relegates much of that to what merely happens 'to' or 'in' me—that is, to what is not self-determining in the sense necessary for action. But the idea that a non-deliberated action cannot be mine unless it stems from the workings of instinct is phenomenologically impossible to maintain.<sup>20</sup>

Nor is Korsgaard tempted by that view. Thus, her only alternative is to treat such action as implicitly involving deliberation. The argument is two-fold: first, to say I am moved by affection need not conflict with being motivated by reason, since 'to be "motivated by reason"' is normally to be motivated by one's reflective endorsement of incentives and impulses, including affections, which arise in a natural way' (Korsgaard 1996: 127). And second, the idea of reflective endorsement, contrary to appearances, need not involve an explicit act of reflection: '[a]cting on rational principle need not involve any step-by-step process of reasoning, for when a principle is deeply internalized we may simply *recognize* the case as falling under the principle' (Korsgaard 2002b: 24–25). In such cases we can say that the action is not preceded by a decision but 'embodies' one (Korsgaard 2002c: 21). While this conception saves the phenomena, however, Korsgaard's ontology cannot support it. If the person is understood as animal-plus-reflection, and reflection is understood as a second-order intention, the notion of 'internalization'—sedimented beliefs and desires that you once 'actively arrived at' and so go to make up 'you'—remains a metaphor whose efficacy depends entirely on Korsgaard's equivocal concept of self-consciousness. Once they are no longer objects of specific choice, but rather sedimented products of such choices, beliefs and desires I have 'actively arrived at' seem little different in their ontological (and hence motivational) status than any other element of my psychology. If acting on them in non-deliberative mindless coping is supposed to instantiate the concept of reflective endorsement, this can only be because Korsgaard has smuggled the idea of reflection as a deliberative act into the concept of self-consciousness. Nothing in the phenomenology of action, however,

supports the claim that the way mindless coping is solicited by the world is a matter of making decisions.

Korsgaard is certainly right, however, to deny that such coping is something *automatic*, deriving from something 'in' me rather than from me. When I am drawn by affection to do a kind act for my wife, I am not driven by some blind impulse that operates in accord with norms but not in light of them. I belong wholly within the space of meaning that Heidegger calls 'world'. The affection is what it is only because it is intentionally directed toward my wife, and she, in turn, is present to me as she is in such action because I am who I am, because of my practical identity as her husband. Yet Korsgaard's ontology of self-consciousness cannot clarify these simple phenomenological relations. On the one hand, because she defines the 'I' in terms of the one who reflects, and so stands at a distance from all beliefs and desires, it remains a mystery how even the incorporated beliefs and desires can be *me*. At best they can be mental contents that were at one time an object of choice. On the other hand, to claim that because I have a self-conscious nature it is legitimate to describe mindless coping as involving implicit decisions about what incentives to follow is—as Heidegger said of Kant—to abandon phenomenology for a rationalistic reconstruction.

Korsgaard's position represents another sally in the skirmish between Humeans, who see the practical self as a kind of epiphenomenon of its psychological experiences (beliefs and desires), and Kantians, who see experience as nothing prior to its constitution in spontaneity. Given the difficulty that either view has in accounting for the phenomenon of non-deliberative agency, it should not surprise us that this phenomenon was one of the main things that led Heidegger beyond the ontology of modern philosophy—with its Cartesian bifurcation of the self into passive 'experiences' and active 'self-consciousness'—toward an ontology of care. In Heidegger's terms, Kantians misunderstand facticity, while Humeans misunderstand transcendence. But to understand how the care-structure accounts for our beholdenness to norms it is not enough to put facticity and transcendence—psychology and agency—together in an external way. Rather, one must do justice to a point about human beings that Korsgaard notes but mischaracterizes. After arguing that a person is 'both active and passive, both an agent and a subject of experiences', she adds that 'of course our actions and activities are among the things we experience' while 'having experiences is among the things we *do*' (Korsgaard 1996b: 363, 363). Korsgaard takes this to mean that 'each can be reduced to a form of the other', hence that I can fully grasp my action as something I merely undergo, while I can also fully grasp my experiences as something constituted by me. Yet this seems just the wrong conclusion to draw. The fact that these aspects have something distinctive about them means that no such reduction is possible and, ultimately, that the distinction is inadequate for understanding the ontology of the creature that possesses both. The kind of subject who can be an agent while being absorbed in the world is a self whose identity is normatively achieved not by overcoming the passivity in its nature in order to constitute itself as a unified person, but rather by overcoming its anonymity to take responsibility for its own self as a task.<sup>21</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pippin (2003: 914): ‘... den ausschließlich praktischen, nicht metaphysischen Status von Subjektivität in der nachkantischen Tradition’.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Reasons exist because we need them, and we need them because of the structure of our reflective consciousness’ (Korsgaard 1996: 96). Korsgaard’s concern is primarily moral norms—the good, the right—but she suggests that her approach provides a general account of normativity (Korsgaard 1996: 21), and I will treat it as such here.

<sup>3</sup> See Haugeland 1998.

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion in Heidegger 1982: 169.

<sup>5</sup> Korsgaard 2002a: 14. This reference is to the first of Korsgaard’s Locke Lectures, delivered at Oxford University in 2002. Though her Locke Lectures have not yet been published, Korsgaard has made them publicly available on her website, and I thus feel entitled to refer to them.

<sup>6</sup> Here Korsgaard is making a general point about form and function—which allow us, for example, to attribute intentional content to the movements of an alarm clock—but I will ignore the questions that this approach raises.

<sup>7</sup> See also Korsgaard 1996a.

<sup>8</sup> Korsgaard (1996b: 364) claims that Parfit’s paradoxical conclusions about personal identity arise because his ‘arguments depend on viewing the person primarily as a locus of experience, and agency as a form of experience’. Korsgaard, in contrast, like Heidegger, argues that ‘our conception of what a person is depends in a deep way on our conception of ourselves as agents’.

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive discussion of these matters see Dreyfus 1991.

<sup>10</sup> See the discussion of the ‘reflection theory of self-awareness’ in Zahavi 1999: 15–21.

<sup>11</sup> Okrent (1999: 49) notes this equivocation as well: The claim that the human mind is ‘self-conscious in the sense that it is essentially reflective’ admits ‘of at least three different interpretations, and Korsgaard gives us little explicit to go on in disambiguating the claim’. There is, first, the idea that every intentional state includes a more or less explicit ‘I think’. There is, second, the idea that the human mind is distinguished by that fact that it must be *possible* for *all* its intentional states to become objects of second-order intentions. And finally there is the idea that the human mind is essentially reflective because *some* of its intentional states can become the objects of second-order intentions. As Okrent (1999: 51) points out, Korsgaard’s central conclusion about the reflective source of the normative problem follows ‘only if one assumes that our intentions actually have a self-conscious, reflective structure’, and it is on the basis of this assumption that I will here work out my own criticism of Korsgaard’s argument.

<sup>12</sup> Okrent (1999: 51–2) also finds Korsgaard’s conclusion—that reflective distancing cuts us off from our own mental states in such a way as to confront us with the normative

problem—under-argued. He reconstructs one possible argument as follows: ‘First-order intentions are directed directly on the world, and because of this they directly determine action. When you believe that there is a predator in the area, or desire to flee a predator, this is a fact about you that specifies how you are related to your environment, and, insofar as your intentional states motivate and explain action, that fact in turn will have direct consequences for how you behave. But when you think that you believe that there is a predator in the area, or think that you desire to flee a predator, this is a fact about how you are related to yourself. And nothing follows directly about how you will behave from the fact that you have this sort of intentional state’. Okrent does not attribute this argument to Korsgaard, however, since it would lead to her conclusion only if she accepted the first view of self-consciousness mentioned above (endnote 11), namely, that ‘all our intentions display a reflective structure’—a view that Okrent finds ‘implausible’. But even if we accept this view of self-consciousness, Okrent’s reconstruction will not necessarily lead to the desired conclusion. For the aim is to show why it is that making a first-order intention into an object is to call it into question, and Okrent’s reconstruction simply assumes that it is. If I merely *take note* of my first-order intention, I certainly objectify it; but such objectification need not have the structure Okrent attributes to it—namely, that I ‘*think that I believe there is a predator present*’, or ‘*believe that I desire to flee*’. For these terms introduce a moment of doubt into the process that need not be present in objectification as mere ‘noticing’. One must still, therefore, explain how such doubt or indecision emerges *merely* through reflection.

<sup>13</sup> I have elaborated this argument in Crowell 2001 and Crowell 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Korsgaard’s aim is to show that Kant’s categorical and hypothetical imperatives are just such conditions for the possibility of agency that arise from our humanity and so provide the principles for the universal moral obligations. She therefore must show that my valuing *my* humanity gives me reasons to value *yours* (Korsgaard 1996: 131–145). We shall not pursue these issues here, since our interest is not in the claims she makes about the scope of moral reasons, but in her analysis of the relation between agency and the idea of humanity itself.

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger 1985: 117, 126. See also Heidegger 1962: 73; 1953: 47–48.

<sup>16</sup> Korsgaard 1996b: 370. See also Korsgaard 1996: 100.

<sup>17</sup> Korsgaard, of course, believes that it is, claiming that the situation of agency is governed by the categorical and hypothetical imperatives. We shall not stop to examine her arguments here. But as Pippin (2003: 925) has pointed out, the impossibility of generating any genuine norms from ‘humanity’ in the formal sense is attested in Korsgaard’s own admission that ‘human identity has been differently constituted in different social worlds’ and that ‘the concept of moral wrongness as we now understand it belongs to the world we live in, the one brought about by the Enlightenment, where one’s identity is one’s relation to humanity itself’ (Korsgaard 1996: 117). But this relation to ‘humanity itself’ can only be a relation to ‘human identity’ as constituted in our world—hence more like a contingent practical identity, a ‘description under which you value yourself’. For Pippin this means that if the substance of any demand stemming from ‘humanity’ is ‘in dieser Weise eine Frage der “Geschichte”’, and if we have no way of determining the normative force of some historical version of the conception of humanity, then the fact that there could be some formal demand is by no means as important as ‘die Tatsache, dass die Verwirklichung dieser Erfordernisse eine Sache spezifisch sozio-historischer Angelegenheit ist’ (Pippin 2003: 925).

<sup>18</sup> It might be argued that the passages upon which this criticism is based appear in a section where Korsgaard is trying to defend the idea of our obligations to animals, and that

if we simply abandon this (perhaps implausible) argument we could treat her formulations here as strained and unrepresentative. But the same tension shows up, even if in less pronounced fashion, in many other passages. At bottom the problem is that to 'identify' with my humanity is to identify with something defined in terms of a break—reflection breaks with animality—whereas this very identification is supposed to yield principles of unity. Okrent (1999: 74) makes the same point in order to identify what he takes to be the underlying problem with Korsgaard's whole approach, namely, that she is 'trapped between an essentially naturalistic insight, that our nature as human animals implies that we must have some practical identity or other, and her commitment to a modern doctrine . . . the doctrine of reflective distance'. But Okrent finds the same flaw in Heidegger's position: 'Heidegger is still committed to the Cartesian view that there is a fundamental divide between human being and animal nature . . . So he is simply blind to the naturalistic basis of the fact that human beings must always have some practical identity or other, and is condemned to a fruitless oscillation between voluntarism and relativism' (Okrent 1999: 74). Thus Okrent wants to retain Korsgaard's naturalism together with Heidegger's pragmatic concept of reflection. But to do so he must minimize the significance, in the ontology of care, of Heidegger's analyses of anxiety, guilt, and death, in which something like a 'fundamental divide between human being and animal nature' is embedded (Okrent 1999: 73). Whether a Heideggerian ontology without these elements can do justice to the normative question may be doubted however. See Crowell (2007).

<sup>19</sup> This formulation is drawn from Dreyfus (1991: 3): 'At the foundation of Heidegger's new approach is a phenomenology of "mindless" everyday coping skills as the basis of all intelligibility'.

<sup>20</sup> Korsgaard's position—that constitutive standards are what we would follow if we were always rational, but we are not always rational—does not easily accommodate the common-sense idea that the supposedly non-rational parts of the soul can be 'no less internal to me' than my explicit choices. On this point see Sher 2001 and Sher 2006. Pippin (2003: 918–19) makes a similar point about Korsgaard's discussion, in 'The Normativity of Instrumental Reason', of Tex, a cowboy who—we would say—'chooses' not to let his pals amputate his badly wounded leg. Since Tex will die if the leg is not amputated, Korsgaard cannot say that *Tex* has chosen not to have his leg amputated; rather, she must say that it was the 'fear' within him. Tex has 'failed' at being a *subject*; and indeed, *Tex* was not there at all, only his 'animal identity' was, which exercised control over his actions. Against this, Pippin protests: 'Indem er sich der Amputation widersetzt, ist Tex nicht "zu schwach", um der "wirkliche Tex" zu sein. In einem solchen Widerstand drückt er nur etwas aus und entdeckt etwas von diesem wirklichen Tex . . .'

<sup>21</sup> Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Trinity College Dublin, the International Conference on Phenomenology and Ethos (Guangzhou, China), and the International Society for Phenomenological Studies (Asilomar, California). I am grateful to philosophers at each of these venues for many helpful comments and criticisms. I would especially like to thank Mark Okrent, whose own paper on this topic stimulated my interest in it.

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