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# BEING-IN-THE-EARTH

## HEIDEGGER AND THE PHENOMENON OF LIFE

Andrew Tyler Johnson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick  
Department of Philosophy

April, 2012

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Finally, none of this would have been remotely possible without the unceasing support of my partner, Jeung Yeon Lee. No words can express my gratitude for her patience, generosity and companionship over the years. I dedicate this thesis to her in love and friendship.



## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research carried out by me; that I am the sole author and researcher and that the work presented herein is entirely my own; that the research for and writing of this thesis was carried out while in candidature for a research degree at Warwick University; that no portion of this work has been submitted for a degree or for any other qualification at this or any other university or institution; that all source material has been clearly and adequately acknowledged and cited; and that none of this work has been published prior to submission.

## Abstract

The principal aim of this thesis is to mobilize the conceptual apparatus of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in order to recuperate an understanding of *life* as it is concretely known and experienced in the immediacy of its actual being-lived-out, or simply, to develop a distinctly Heideggerian conception of primordial phenomenal life. I argue that the basic elements of a more originary interpretation of life are already present in embryo in Heidegger's work, i.e., that Heidegger provides us with invaluable resources for understanding life in a more rigorous way despite the fact that he himself, given his grounding question, is unable to recognize, embrace and exploit them. These elements and resources function on a register organized by the ancient notions of desire, pursuit, provocation, need, want, hardship and survival. Accordingly the challenge is to uncover and lay bare the basic phenomena of which these notions are only the most natural and familiar expressions along with, and just as importantly, the 'logic' of this expression. The central axis around which this analysis turns is the Heideggerian image of a primal world-earth strife, the origin and ground of which are now seen to lie at the heart of the distinctively human way to be itself, as something constitutive of and thus essential to our very humanity.

Moreover, such a reappropriation of Heideggerian thought naturally and unavoidably forces a reevaluation of certain major themes of that thought. In particular I show how this displacement of the strife onto the being of the human can function as an alternative explanation for the origin, essence and inner movement of *technology*, one that places the so-called 'history of Being' in abeyance and for that reason re-opens the possibility for the human to take its destiny back into its own hands, that is, to reassume responsibility for its own history.

## List of abbreviations

Wherever possible, works by Heidegger are cited in the Gesamtausgabe pagination followed by the translation pagination. Some translations have been modified slightly.

- EGT        *Early Greek Thinking*. Translated by David F. Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975)
- EP         *The End of Philosophy*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973)
- GA 2       *Sein und Zeit*. Gesamtausgabe Band 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977). Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008)
- GA 4       *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*. Gesamtausgabe Band 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981). Translated by Keith Hoeller as *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000)
- GA 5       *Holzwege*. Gesamtausgabe Band 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977). Translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes as *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- GA 6.1    *Nietzsche I*. Gesamtausgabe Band 6.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996)
- GA 6.2    *Nietzsche II*. Gesamtausgabe Band 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997)
- GA 7       *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Gesamtausgabe Band 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000)

- GA 9            *Wegmarken. Gesamtausgabe Band 9* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976). Translated by William McNeill as *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- GA 12           *Unterwegs zur Sprache. Gesamtausgabe Band 12* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985). Partially translated by Peter D. Hertz as *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971)
- GA 17           *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung. Gesamtausgabe Band 17* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994). Translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom as *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005)
- GA 18           *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie. Gesamtausgabe Band 18* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002). Translated by Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer as *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009)
- GA 20           *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs. Gesamtausgabe Band 20* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994). Translated by Theodore Kisiel as *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992)
- GA 21           *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit. Gesamtausgabe Band 21* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995). Translated by Thomas Sheehan as *Logic: The Question of Truth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010)
- GA 22           *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie. Gesamtausgabe Band 22* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993). Translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)
- GA 24           *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie. Gesamtausgabe*

- Band 24 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997).  
Translated by Albert Hofstadter as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)
- GA 29/30 *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit*. Gesamtausgabe Band 29/30 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004). Translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)
- GA 34 *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*. Gesamtausgabe Band 34 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988). Translated by Ted Sadler as *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus* (London: Continuum, 2002)
- GA 36/37 *Sein und Wahrheit*. Gesamtausgabe Band 36/37 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001). Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt as *Being and Truth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010)
- GA 38 *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*. Gesamtausgabe Band 38 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998). Translated by Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna as *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009)
- GA 39 *Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhine'*. Gesamtausgabe Band 39 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980)
- GA 45 *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte 'Probleme' der 'Logik'*. Gesamtausgabe Band 45 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984). Translated by André Schuwer and Richard Rojewicz as *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected 'Problems' of 'Logic'* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)

- GA 54      *Parmenides*. Gesamtausgabe Band 54 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992). Translated by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz as *Parmenides* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998)
- GA 56/57      *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*. Gesamtausgabe Band 56/57 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987). Translated by Ted Sadler as *Toward the Definition of Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2000)
- GA 58      *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. Gesamtausgabe Band 58 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992)
- GA 59      *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*. Gesamtausgabe Band 59 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993). Translated by Tracy Colony as *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* (London: Continuum, 2010)
- GA 61      *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*. Gesamtausgabe Band 61 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994). Translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001)
- GA 62      *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*. Gesamtausgabe Band 62 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005)
- GA 63      *Ontologie - Hermeneutik der Faktizität*. Gesamtausgabe Band 63 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995). Translated by John van Buren as *Ontology - Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008)
- GA 65      *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Gesamtausgabe Band 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994).

- Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly as  
*Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (Bloomington:  
Indiana University Press, 2000)
- GA 80      *Vorträge*. Gesamtausgabe Band 80 (Frankfurt am Main:  
Vittorio Klostermann, 1997)
- GA 85      *Vom Wesen der Sprache*. Gesamtausgabe Band 85  
(Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999).  
Translated by Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna  
as *On the Essence of Language* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004)
- HR          *The Heidegger Reader*. Edited by Günter Figal, translated by  
Jerome Veith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,  
2009)
- N1          *Nietzsche, Vols. 1 and 2*. Translated by David Farrell Krell  
(San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1979)
- PLT        *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter  
(New York: Harper & Row, 1971)
- PPW        *Philosophical and Political Writings*. Edited by Manfred  
Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003)
- QCT        *The Question Concerning Technology*. Translated by William  
Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial, 1982)
- S          *Sojourns*. Translated by John Panteleimon Manoussakis  
(Albany: SUNY Press, 2005)
- Supp.*      *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and  
Beyond*. Edited by John van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press,  
2002)
- ZS        *Zollikon Seminars*. Edited by Medard Boss, translated by  
Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Evanston: Northwestern  
University Press, 2001)

## Introduction

### I. Toward a general theory of accumulation

It is necessary to begin with a brief statement concerning the broader problem with which this project is concerned and which, despite its being only sporadically addressed in the main body of the text, articulates its proper context of intelligibility. This problem has to do, in a word, with the phenomenon of *accumulation*, or, to employ the expression favoured by Bataille, of productive expenditure. Not only is this the defining problem of our time – that is, for us who live in the increasingly savage and volatile era of late capitalism – but in addition it is the main impetus of the thought of the philosopher with whom the present study is principally engaged: Martin Heidegger. For if it is clear that the various stages and strands of Heidegger's philosophy are linked together and consolidated by the master theme of 'being', in one permutation or another, it is no less obvious that this philosophy reaches its apogee and completion, its inner realization, in the meditation on the question concerning technology and the brutal logic of the *Ge-stell*, the 'en-framing', as a blind, ruthless and unremitting accumulating-inventorying carried out for the sake of nothing but further inventorying, along with its deleterious and potentially



catastrophic effects: the sacking and plundering of the earth, the reduction of beings as such and as a whole to stock to be mastered and manipulated at will, and above all the chronic and very likely irremediable thoughtlessness of the human species and its near-total abandonment of its own sovereign essence. Moreover, Heidegger succeeds in reformulating this problem in a radically novel and deeply incisive way: in particular, his work has yielded the crucial insight that the *inner logic* of productive expenditure is anterior and exterior to any and every factually contingent arrangement of social relations and productive forces, that is, that accumulation *qua en-framing* does not stem from any particular form of life and therefore cannot be checked or reversed by any mere social or political transformation – and accordingly that what is most necessary today is not revolution (and not even a revolution at the level of production itself) but rather a *complete ontological reorientation*, a total spiritual-existential renewal of our historical Dasein.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, it must be conceded that such a total spiritual renewal is precisely what Heidegger's philosophy, as the pure thinking of the truth of Being, has proven incapable of engendering or

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<sup>1</sup> A view which he shares with a number of contemporaneous thinkers inspired by Weber, including Bataille and, from the Frankfurt School, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse.

sustaining; it allows for a necessary inversion of the problem, but only at the cost of precluding the very sort of resolution it itself demands. For while Heidegger accurately identifies the *essence* of the danger that confronts us – viz., an *accumulationism* that is far more primordial, chronologically but also logically, than mere capital accumulation – he nevertheless thinks the origin and movement of this danger metaphysically, with the double result that, first, the *Ge-stell* is understood most precisely as a kind of *gift* (*Geschenk*), i.e., something for which there may be grounds for concern but certainly not for condemnation, and least of all for active resistance, and second, and consequently, the possibility of the renewal is made to lie *not* with humanity itself, in some untapped superabundance of strength concealed within its own being (however abstract and however implausible its practical realization), but rather and exclusively in a kind of crypto-religious eschaton and parousia, a cosmic-destinal rebirth for which humanity might dedicate itself to laying the groundwork but ultimately in whose spontaneous irruption it would itself be passively implicated. In short, there is a structural and permanent incommensurability between philosophy's problem and its concept; as the pure thinking of the truth of Being, Heideggerian thought is unable to live up to the urgency of its own demands.

This is the guiding problem and task that together constitute, if you like, the plane or 'image' of the present undertaking, the open horizon

of its enquiry and the end toward which it is finally directed – viz., to understand the phenomenon of accumulationism, of something like en-framing as the logic of all actual or ontic accumulation, yet entirely independently of the kinds of troubling eschatological or ‘mysterio-logical’ notions with which that concept is traditionally and doctrinally bound up in Heidegger’s thought (in particular, everything pertaining to the withdrawal, abandonment and forgetting of a *something*, an *x*, that we wrongly but inevitably persist in calling ‘Being’). What follows can therefore be said to constitute a propaedeutic (one of several) to a general ontological theory of accumulation. Part of what I wish to demonstrate here is that it is none other than Heidegger himself who provides some of the most powerful and invaluable conceptual resources for such a future theory – in essence, that Heidegger can and must be read against himself in this particular respect.

## II. Toward a phenomenology of life

It is important to keep this plane constantly in view, even if only at the periphery, insofar as it means that the specific subject matter to which this enquiry is almost entirely devoted – viz., the twofold question of *life* and *earth* in relation to Heideggerian philosophy – does not here fall within the remit of concern for which it seems most obviously and immediately relevant: viz., that of ecological and environmental

philosophy, deep ecology and the like. More precisely: while it may very well turn out that the ideas explored and developed here have some use or ramifications for ecological, etc. philosophy, nevertheless this is not the angle from which the themes of life and earth are approached. Rather the interest is principally ontological and secondarily politico-economic, and the latter only and precisely insofar as it might be grounded by the former – that is, it is ultimately a question of whether and to what extent these themes serve to illuminate the origin and essence of a certain logic of production.

The particular task I have attempted here is a re-reading of Heidegger through the prism of a notion of life that, as it happens, is not at all the life with which we are by now all too familiar and which we commonly associate with certain well-known texts and passages. Rather I have had in mind a more germinal and inchoate sense of life, a life that is always lurking in the crevices and interstices of those texts (and others less obvious) and that occasionally breaks loose and destabilizes the entire conceptual edifice, even if it always and eventually succumbs to it again in the end – a life, in short, that must be extracted and reconstituted. My argument, *in nuce*, is this: that there is in Heidegger's philosophy a certain dormant and concealed – indeed even repressed – image of life that, once recovered and dusted off, is capable of taking over a significant share of the work normally assigned to another and far more elusive notion, one whose identity is dissolved and dispersed

in a prolific and open-ended series of signifiers (*Sein, Seyn, Geheimnis, Geviert, Rätsel, Ereignis...*, etc.) and which is known by one of these signifiers in particular only insofar as it cannot be spoken of in any other way. In other words, phenomena that are usually understood to be governed by the autonomous movement and inner logic of this anonymous *something*, this 'Being', may now be treated as functions of a certain kind of life.

Let me be more specific: by life I mean neither a particular socio-historical construct, the target-object of certain historically contingent power/truth regimes (e.g., life as the correlate of a 'biopolitics'), nor the sort of 'Life' that has, tracing a different but equally influential (and, to be sure, important) arc, been interpreted ontologically as chaos, creativity, virtuality, multiplicity, differance, etc. (Life as a description of the flux and flow of the real as such). In other words, I do not here intend life as a possible object of consciousness, something 'out there' in the world that could double as the subject matter for a theoretical reflection. Rather by life I mean something that is at once a form of experience and a mode of being, that is, life as it is actually given to and apprehended by the living (although by no means necessarily thematically) in the course of its actually and concretely *being lived out* – in short, a thoroughly *phenomenological* conception of life, life as phenomenal or actually lived life.

Such a conception implies three things. First, and on the one hand,

inasmuch as phenomenology is ontology (or the method of ontology), the notion of phenomenal life here signifies life *as such*, the very being of life, which is simply to say, denotes *universal* life as the life of the whole of the living qua living, from plants and simple organisms all the way up through the so-called higher animals and indeed the human itself (that is, life neither in the sense of 'animality' as opposed to 'humanity' nor as a mere synonym for 'existence', i.e., 'being-in-the-world', as the name for the exclusively human way of being). Second, and on the other hand, inasmuch as we perceive and understand this universal life only and precisely because we ourselves also live it, to investigate phenomenal life, to undertake an onto-phenomenological interrogation of life, is *ipso facto* to interrogate ourselves as living beings. That is to say, the ontology of life must necessarily be an ontology of ourselves, a self-interrogation of and by that entity that is distinguished by the fact that, insofar as it is possessed of an understanding of being and hence of a constant and constitutional concern for its own being, it can and indeed must have *the being of its own life* at issue for it, i.e., can and must become an issue for itself not only with respect to its existence but also and equally with respect to its life. Accordingly, and third and finally, the project of a phenomenology of life implies a *dual* investigation into the being of universal life as we ourselves, as really and essentially living beings, actually live it, as well as into our own human way of being in its totality insofar as we *are* that entity that does not merely exist but

rather 'lives as existent' (a key Heideggerian expression the precise meaning of which we shall examine in some detail below).

What I am suggesting, then, is that Heidegger not only makes possible the thinking of such a phenomenal life, but also (and more importantly, since the notion of phenomenal life will turn out, in the end, and despite important conceptual modifications, to be a very old and traditional one), openly flirts with it in several places, and in that way carves out various points of insertion that, for a variety of reasons, he himself is unable or unwilling to exploit. My aim here is to seize onto these points and loosen them up, to isolate and *re-construct* this nascent, partial and fragmented idea of life in order to assess its theoretical capabilities and its consequences for certain aspects of Heideggerian thought.

To sketch out this reconstruction in a few words: I shall attempt to show that phenomenal life is best understood as a mode of being at once commensurate with and yet irreducible to existence, that is, as an autonomous modality of *In-sein*, 'in-being', that unfolds in the midst of an equally irreducible extrawordly zone, sphere or dimension of openness that I shall call *earth*. Expressed in a handy and by now familiar formula, we may say that life is something like the sheer living-out or living-through of an originary *being-in-the-earth*. What I am proposing, in other words, is that we attempt to think the meaning of actually lived life by means of an expansion of the horizon of

phenomenality or manifestation itself, or more precisely, by means of an operation that would constitute the doubling or partitioning of the 'Da', the 'there' or 'clearing', in which we always already dwell, and in that sense the doubling of our own being itself.

I am aware of the many objections that can and will be raised against such an endeavour. It will immediately be pointed out that Heidegger is perhaps the philosopher who went further than any other in 'destructing' the very idea of something like an ordinary human (because universal) life. For Heidegger, it will rightly be said, the human can be thought of as 'living' or 'alive' only through a prior negation or suspension of its properly human essence – its residing in the open of Being, its existence – and by treating it instead as just another being that appears *within* this open itself, viz., as an animal, a life-thing endowed with life-properties. But this is obviously to reverse the order of ontological priority: existence does not supervene on life, is not ultimately resolvable into 'vital' states and processes, and precisely because all such states and processes can only first emerge *as such* within the open of existence; life, in other words, can never account for existence just because it is existence that accounts for life. We are thus confronted with the paradox that to investigate the being of life through the living-being of the human is necessarily to deny the human its *humanitas*, its ownmost humanly way to be. Put differently, the very idea of a Heideggerian life-phenomenology appears self-contradictory,



seems to entail a renunciation of the guiding premise of Heideggerian thought.

In addition, fundamental questions will no doubt be raised pertaining not only to structural configuration of this extrawordly life but more importantly and problematically to its sheer possibility and even intelligibility. For how indeed could the extrawordly disclose itself in the first place if not in an intrawordly manner? And conversely, how could one ever purport to step 'outside' the world in order to access the domain of life? The suspicion arises that we are dealing either with a clever but ultimately vacuous indulgence in word-play, or else with an elementary failure to grasp the all-encompassing and totalizing scope of worldly existence.

These difficulties (and others) will be addressed in due time. For now the following will suffice. Regarding the latter set of concerns, I think it can be shown that there is no real contradiction – even along Heideggerian lines – in admitting two (or several) equiprimordial zones or domains of manifestation, and not even in accessing them, provided we take care to delineate our terms and concepts with precision and do not slip back into familiar but faulty ways of thinking. As for the former, more exegetical concerns, they amount to little more than a restatement of the problem, for the question here is precisely that of the possibility of a non-objective sort of life, i.e., a life that does not presuppose the horizon of the world and therefore a 'being-in-the-

world' as its condition of possibility. The guiding motivation here is nothing less than a basic *intuition* of life – in other words, the fact that life is precisely not the sort of thing about which we might ponder, in the cool detachment of a scientific attitude, whether it implicates us or not. Rather we know immediately (if non-thetically) that life is something much more than an extrinsic and reductive determination that arises out of an illegitimate self-thingification, and for no other reason than that we live it, that we *are* this living, that such living is constitutive of our human *being*.

### III. Summary of chapters

The following investigation can be divided into two parts. Part One (Chapters 1-4) offers a series of slightly askance and abrasive readings of a number of key texts, ranging from the earliest Freiburg lectures up through the essays on the fourfold and dwelling from the 1950s, in a twofold attempt, first, to identify and recover two key moments where Heidegger's thought unwittingly turns against itself and opens itself up to something like universal (phenomenal) life (in the latter, to a universalizable human life), and second, to show how in both cases these openings are swiftly and efficiently closed up and covered over by means of the same silent gesture of reappropriation through which the life-dimension in question is subsumed under the strict order and logic

of the world as the zone of being.

Chapter 1 examines the early concept of factual life, but not, as is often done, from the perspective of its later incarnation as existence, but rather with an eye to its most precise and essential sense-content as this is determined by the specific problem-nexus for which factual life is held to constitute the most proper subject of analysis. I argue that when factual life is viewed in this fashion, from the point of view of its origin rather than its destination, it turns out, contrary to our usual ways of thinking, to be something like universal life as the unitary openness of the *es lebt/weltet*, the '*it lives/worlds*'. As the *it lives/worlds*, factual life comprises a single life-continuum ranging from the primitive 'orectic' or desiring life of plants and animals all the way up through the highly complex 'apophantic'-existential life of human beings. From this it follows, first, that plant and animal life belongs to the very same openness or 'in-ness', to one and the same *being-in-the-world*, as human life (i.e., that animal and human life are separated only by a difference of degree, not of kind), and second, that to desire there necessarily corresponds a mode of revealing that is not a *be-ing* (i.e., that desire apprehends..., but it does not apprehend beings).

Chapter 2 attempts to unravel the mystery of how and why the unity and universality of life begin to dissolve around the time of the writing of *Being and Time* and why the *it lives/worlds* is eventually sundered completely into the antitheses of living and worlding in the

now-notorious WS 1929-30 lectures, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. Here I show how the shifting of the overall problem-horizon of philosophy in the direction of the being-question, i.e., toward fundamental ontology, is responsible for the restriction of being-in-the-world to human beings exclusively and the redefining of 'life' as world-poverty (*Weltarmut*). We now see, contrary to the position of the early lectures, that being-manifestation and oretic-manifestation cannot constitute end points of the same life-spectrum, in which case it becomes a problem as to whether and how 'life' can still be said to be open at all – an in-ness or in-being in any meaningful sense – inasmuch as Heidegger does not seem to allow for anything like an extrawordly zone or dimension of manifestation.

Chapter 3 argues that Heidegger unintentionally introduces, in the 1935-6 essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art', a certain pre-thematic phenomenal understanding of life by way of the concept of *earth*. Earth is seen to possess a dual sense: on the one hand, and conceptually, as the boundary-setting law of the self-arising of beings into the open, and on the other, and intuitively, as precisely the sort of autonomous, extrawordly zone or sphere of openness that the WS 1929-30 lectures refused to acknowledge. Thus life is here given (never explicitly, to be sure), not as something purely negative, as the lack or privation of world, but rather in an entirely positive way as the particular form of in-ness corresponding to this extrawordly dimension – a distinctly earthly

mode of in-being, or simply, a 'being-in-the-earth'. The form of manifestation peculiar to the earth-dimension emerges, again not as a being-apprehending, but now as a kind of assailing, withdrawing and provoking, from which it follows that life qua being-in-the-earth is characterized not by comportment toward beings as such but rather by experiences of want, worry, hardship, privation, fear, uncertainty, insecurity and the like. At this stage, the precise relationship between (1) the possibility of an orectic mode of in-being, (2) the earth as an autonomous dimension of the open, (3) the life-experiences of need, want, hardship, etc. – how all of these pieces fit together into a unitary and coherent whole – is still unclear and is precisely what needs to be worked out.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how this latent sense of a kind of earthly life is lost in Heidegger's later work insofar as the earth is eventually reabsorbed into the restricted economy of the world as one of the four primal world-powers or world-attributes. I then go on to suggest, and for this very reason, that the quasi-soteriological (and much overused) notion of 'dwelling on the earth' is of little use to environment-conscious philosophers inasmuch as the state of the earth itself, and hence of our relations to it, is always and necessarily determined by and through a certain worldly destining exclusively.

Part Two (Chapters 5 and 6) takes up the challenge of imagining how these various threads might be woven together in order to fashion

a self-standing and workable (if nonetheless rudimentary) concept of universal phenomenal life; it then goes on to explore the implications of such a life for certain aspects of Heideggerian thought, in particular, aspects pertaining to the origin and essence of technology.

Chapter 5 explicitly links the notion of orectic in-being with the image of the earth as the open zone of assault and provocation in order to produce a more complete picture of being-in-the-earth, i.e., originary phenomenal life, as a pursuing of what manifests itself as 'compatible' within an earth-zone defined accordingly by the revealing and concealing of the compatible and the facilitation or hindering of its attainment. Here I provide a rough sketch, first, of *pure* being-in-the-earth and of the pure earth itself as the zone of life, and second, of the *unity* of existence-and-life in its pure state, or *in itself*, in the course of which I engage with both the instinct-intentionality theory of Husserl and the life-phenomenological work of Renaud Barbaras. One of the key discoveries to emerge from this chapter is that the phenomenon of *need* (necessity, hardship, privation, etc.) is nowhere to be found either in pure being-in-the-earth or pure living existence.

Chapter 6 analyzes the being of unitary living existence in its 'natural' or 'average everyday' as opposed to its pure state, that is, the way in which living existence has itself *for itself* in its full living-existing way to be, how living existence is at issue for itself *as a living* existence. Here I make the case that need in fact constitutes something like a form

or 'category' of experience, in a quasi-Kantian sense, peculiar to living existence as such – in other words, that need, although phenomenally real, is at bottom nothing more or less than a function of the structural make-up of the unity of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth in and as a unitary horizon of manifestation. I then go on to consider how we might reinterpret the ground of what Heidegger calls 'en-framing', the *Ge-stell*, as the essence of technology, not as following from the abandonment and forgetting of 'Being' but rather and only from out of the internal conflictual relation between life and existence and the production of (perceived) need to which it necessarily gives rise (i.e., the self-interpretation of living existence as a fundamental and insatiable neediness). Accordingly, technology is interpreted as the sum of those strategies of accumulation, systematization, conveniencization and the like that the human mobilizes in the attempt to negate or neutralize these (perceived) needs.

In the conclusion I take these ideas further and reflect on the present state of the globalized-capitalized North as increasingly approximating something like a *pure world* – which is to say, a world totally devoid of an earth-dimension, a zone of pure existence. I consider what it might mean to mitigate this situation (and how such mitigation might be achieved) without resorting to facile and worn-out platitudes about 'dwelling', 'letting be' and the like.

## **Part One**

### **Heidegger's Contribution to a Phenomenology of Universal Life**



## Chapter 1

### Factual Life as Universal Life

#### I. The need to return to the original problem-nexus and sense-content of factual life

In discussing Heidegger's philosophical work during the 1920s (the so-called 'phenomenological decade'), it is tempting to read the early texts and lecture courses projectively, in such a way as to anticipate subsequent developments, and to interpret basic concepts in light of their later incarnations. John van Buren, for example, argues that Heidegger was devoted from the outset to the project of working out a novel approach to the question of the meaning of being by way of an interrogation of the originary horizon of factual life. As van Buren puts it, that which all the sundry figures and traditions on which the young Heidegger drew for inspiration consolidated and 'made thematic for him was the horizon of concrete, historical life in terms of which he could radically re-think the traditional question of being'.<sup>1</sup> From this it

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<sup>1</sup> John van Buren, 'The young Heidegger and phenomenology', in Dreyfus and Wrathall (eds.), *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. 1: Dasein*,

follows that the ultimate meaning or 'sense-content' of factual life was determined *originally* from out of the being-question – in other words, that insofar as the particular problem for which factual life was thought to constitute the most proper subject matter for interrogation was the meaning of being, life could only have amounted to something like the site or 'place' (*Ort*) of the disclosure of being.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, when van Buren goes on to propose a modest realignment of the usual timeline of Heidegger's philosophical trajectory, to the effect that most of the themes of his later period were already worked out by the time of the writing of *Being and Time*, and that the latter text therefore belongs more properly to the post-'*Wendung*'<sup>3</sup> than the pre-*Wendung* Heidegger, he does not in any way disturb the foundation on which this realignment rests, viz., the 'basic intention' of the thinking of being itself; what is at stake is only when and how the various subthemes within this basic intention are taken up and brought to mature expression. It is not the case, for example, that Heidegger's thought 'underwent a miraculous conversion from a purely human-

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*Authenticity, and Death* (London: Routledge, 2002), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 8. Heidegger's 'genuine beginning' was 'the "place" (*Ort*) of "factual life" as the "origin" of all meaning. But he understood this place of life precisely as the "there" of being'.

<sup>3</sup> The term that Heidegger himself preferred to the so-called '*Kehre*'.

centred philosophy to a purely Being-centred one'<sup>4</sup>; rather the being-question was present all along<sup>5</sup> (indeed this is confirmed by Heidegger himself in his 1963 essay, 'My Way to Phenomenology'<sup>6</sup>).

Now this story is certainly correct; there is no question that Heidegger was interested in the problem of the meaning of being from very early on and that the concepts of factual life and facticity prefigure what later gets thought as the 'existence' of the human 'Dasein'. It is, however, perhaps in need of qualification. One indication that things are more complicated than they seem is that at several points in the early works Heidegger quite unambiguously and decisively attributes factual life – that is to say, being-in-the-world – to *plants and animals*.

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<sup>4</sup> van Buren, op. cit., 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 30 n. 29: '[The] basic "intention" (*Vorhaben*) of his questioning remained the same from the early 1920s onwards, namely, to ask what "being' in and through life" means, or, put in other words, to think the relation of being and factual life.'

<sup>6</sup> PPW, 73: 'As I myself practiced phenomenological seeing, teaching and learning in Husserl's proximity after 1919...my interest leaned anew toward the *Logical Investigations*, above all the sixth investigation in the first edition. The distinction which is worked out there between sensuous and categorical intuition revealed itself to me in its scope for the determination of the "manifold meaning of being".'

But if we suppose that Heidegger was motivated by the problem of being from the outset, such that the sense-content of factual life was fixed as the horizon of being, then it would appear to follow that plants and animals, precisely insofar as they live, must also and equally partake of the place of being, that is, that plants and animals must apprehend being as such – something that Heidegger nowhere admits or even suggests. Plants and animals live, to be sure, but they do not have being; by contrast, the human lives, and in living is the place of being. For this reason, then, life cannot be understood originally or primarily as the ‘there’ of being.

It is obvious that the fixation on the problem of being grows more intense over time, that the intensity of the early interest in *the being of factual life* does not correspond to an equally intense interest in the meaning of being itself in and for life. If we therefore suppose that the problem of the meaning of being took root only gradually, which is no doubt the case, then we should have to conclude that the problem of the being of factual life is just to that extent independent of the problem of the meaning of being, that factual life belongs to its own problem-nexus before it gets incorporated into the later-dominant problem-nexus of the being-question – hence that there is another problem-nexus that is at least as original, if not more original, than that of the meaning of being and another determination of factual life than that of the place/there of being. We should then have to ask: what is this *initial* problem-nexus

and how does it determine the *original* sense-content of factual life? That is to say, what *is* factual life before it gets absorbed into the all-inclusive remit of the ground-question of being? An elucidation of this original problem-nexus and sense-content should serve to provide the context within which Heidegger's views on other non-human living beings can be made comprehensible.

## II. The original problem-nexus of life: objectification

To this end let us turn to one of Heidegger's earliest texts, his lectures from the summer of 1920 on the theme of the 'phenomenology of intuition and expression', a project that was intended at the time as a propaedeutic to a comprehensive 'theory of philosophical concept formation'. Here Heidegger provides one of his most systematic treatments as well as sustained applications of the early method of phenomenological destruction. The object of the destruction in this case, that which is actually to be subjected to destructing, is 'life' – in particular, life as it is formulated and deployed along the two major topical axes of 'history' and 'experience' within, respectively, the philosophy of spirit (or culture) and so-called 'life philosophy' (e.g., Bergsonian 'vitalism'), both of which are implicated in, and reinforced by, contemporary biologism and its obsession with 'development'. Life, however, is not to be understood as merely one of a number of possible

or feasible objects of destruction, i.e., as presenting an especially good example of what destruction can do; rather life has a unique and privileged status in the overall program of destruction, such that we can even insist that destruction is first and foremost, and necessarily, destruction of life. But in what sense exactly?

A. SS 1920: *The Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*

Philosophy, Heidegger writes, 'is always an element of factual life experience'.<sup>7</sup> This means that life is the original and *a priori* horizon of all philosophizing, which is given within life as a particular 'enactment' (*Vollzug*). It follows from this that every philosophy has intrinsically to do with life in some way or other: '*factual life experience belongs to the problematic of philosophy in an entirely primordial sense*'.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as every philosophy is a manifestation of life, life always and necessarily finds some degree of expression in every manifestation of philosophy (in which case the very notion of *Lebensphilosophie* is pleonastic: all philosophy is life philosophizing and philosophy of life). Thus it is no exaggeration to say that for the young Heidegger the study of factual life is *philosophia prima* in the strictest sense. 'First' here means not only

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<sup>7</sup> GA 59, 36/26.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 38/27.

chronologically but above all logically; it means that factual life is the privileged object of philosophy qua phenomenology, which then, for its part, as the study of factual life, is elevated to the status of 'original' or 'primordial' science.<sup>9</sup> In this way factual life and phenomenology are inseparable and mutually implicating: each grounds and secures the other's originariness.

And yet, despite this intimacy, philosophy in fact does *not* attain life in a genuinely primordial sense. Rather it is characterized by what Heidegger calls a 'fading of meaningfulness' in the sense of a gradual loss and concealment of the primordial. Fading is really a kind of 'falling away' from the primordial, an alienation whereby the enactment immerses itself in and busies itself with mere 'contents', which are there for it in the derivative modes of 'availability' or, at bottom, sheer 'usability'. But such fallenness is not the result of some special fault of philosophy in particular; it is rather a *structural* tendency of factual life as such and thus affects all enactments qua life-enactments (e.g., science as much as philosophy), and it is because of this *congenital* fading and falling away that philosophy can only ever be said to permeate and express life 'in the character of the faded'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ursprungswissenschaft, Urwissenschaft*. See, e.g., GA 58, 78ff.

<sup>10</sup> GA 59, 37/26f. 'The content of factual life experience *falls away* from the *existence relation* towards other contents...[This] concerns every

Accordingly, destruction sets its sights explicitly on certain familiar philosophical systems and interrogates them as to this 'primordially of the existence relation'. Simply stated, if all philosophy necessarily implicates life as its horizon of enactment, and if philosophy as enactment is always already fallen away from life – which then, for its part, fades away from the enactment of philosophy – then it is easy to see that destruction is nothing other than a way of assessing the severity of the gap between philosophy and life, enactment and horizon, that is, between philosophy and that to which it belongs most intimately as its primal source and ground. This is meant in a twofold sense. On the one hand, inasmuch as factual life is the genuine subject matter of philosophy and that toward which philosophy is always ultimately directed, destruction aims to assess the self-alienation of philosophy, that is, the pitiful situation in which philosophy ceases to deal with the primordial and instead rents itself out to the culture-knowledge industry, which dishes out assignments based on whatever is currently fashionable or necessary for the preservation of tradition and which then appropriates its products, increasingly trivial and indistinguishable, for itself. But on the other hand, and by the same token, insofar as philosophy belongs to life in a special and intimate way, as that life-

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content, relation and enactment of factual life experience...albeit in different respects and different ways.'



enactment that takes life itself as its theme, destruction aims to assess the *self-alienation of life itself*, since the degree of philosophy's self-alienation is also and simultaneously the index of life's separation from its ownmost self-expressing enactment.

This, then, is the proper task and function of destruction with respect to *every* philosophy: to gauge the distance between that philosophy and life as the primordial and thereby the distance between life and itself. Once this is understood, it becomes obvious why the *concept* of life as the initial *concrete object* of destruction is not chosen arbitrarily. For contemporary philosophy – both in Heidegger's time and in our own – is virtually mesmerized by 'life':

The nowadays heavily emphasized, but not unambiguous attitudinal direction towards life-reality, life-advancement and life-intensification, as well as the now common and much cultivated talk about *life, life-feeling, lived experience [Erlebnis]* and *living experience [Erleben]*, are the diversely motivated characteristics of our spiritual situation... The problematic of contemporary philosophy is centred on life as *primal phenomenon...*<sup>11</sup>

Hence the entire program of phenomenological destruction must

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 12f./8, 15/10. Cf. GA 9, 14f./12f.

commence by taking stock of every philosophy that, whether deliberately and explicitly or only indirectly and implicitly, begins from the phenomenon of 'life' as primal reality. By situating itself at the level of the horizon itself, the site of concrete factual life as the ground zero of all experience, phenomenology records the extent of the incommensurability of every 'life'-philosophy to its object and exposes every non-primordial philosophy as sham and empty busywork. Destruction, in short, is set in motion by the problem of the interval between 'life' and *life*.

From this account of the purpose and agenda of destruction, the initial problem-horizon of thought is brought clearly into view: it is nothing less than *the reconciliation and recuperation of fallen, alienated life via phenomenology as genuinely scientific philosophy*. Life conjures up and projects out in front of itself distorting images behind which it hides from itself; life does not express itself but rather shrinks back and flees from itself. Accordingly the principal aim of thought, accomplished through the destruction, is a ruthless and tenacious *iconoclasm*: philosophy smashes up these false projections, every concept that erroneously and disingenuously lays claim to the primordial – 'life' being first and foremost among these – while simultaneously securing its own ground as the site where the reconciliation can eventually occur.

But wherein lies the *modus operandi* of the dissimulation? What constitutes an icon, or, from what particular projections must life be

rescued? In what way does life camouflage and deceive itself, and how does it problematize and comprehend itself on the basis of this self-deception? To answer this we need to see the method of destruction in action. Here we must content ourselves with a brief summarization of Heidegger's argument, only so much as is necessary for bringing the essential point into view.

Let us consider the first topical axis: life as the 'primal phenomenon' of history as it functions in the philosophy of culture or spirit. Concerning this philosophy we can pose the following three questions: (1) what is its *problem* and what is the *tendency* by which it is directed toward this problem? (2) what is the *meaning* or total 'sense-complex' of history as it operates within the context of this problem and tendency? and lastly, (3) does this sense-complex manage to attain the primordial in a *genuine* manner or does it rather, to the contrary, only push the primordial ever further out of reach and deal instead with mere content?

(1) The *problem* of the philosophy of spirit, Heidegger tells us, has to do with absolute validity in the realm of *values*, that is, how 'the absolute validity of values, respectively of the ideas of reason of the *a priori*, stands opposed to the relative, changeable being of the empirical and factual'. In the simplest terms, how can there be universally valid norms and values in the major spiritual domains of science, morality and art – i.e., how can logic, ethics and aesthetics ever be attained – if all

thinking, willing and feeling are relative to particular cultures and time periods?<sup>12</sup> Accordingly the *tendency* toward the problem is the drive to secure not only that which transcends history (i.e., the fixed and necessary as opposed to the mobile and contingent) but above all that which *governs* history, 'that which gives the historical and the empirical its sense, prescribes its norms', indeed 'that to which the historical itself is subordinate, which it serves and to which it aspires'<sup>13</sup> – in short, a general 'reason and value systematics as philosophy of culture'.<sup>14</sup>

(2) As for *sense*: 'history' here means *living* history, i.e., the history of the living spirit, or spirit as life as primal phenomenon. Life is the flux and flow of time as opposed to the atemporality of the *a priori*; it is pure creating-objectifying becoming and development. But how, in that case, is the atemporal implicated in the vital flux? In other words, insofar as 'life is seen as culture, as manifestation', how is it possible 'that this culture formation and life enacts itself...in a bond to norm-giving principles and values'?<sup>15</sup> In this way a fundamental tension emerges: 'The relativity and singular uniqueness of every historical culture formation stands opposed to the absoluteness and supra-temporal

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 66/51.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 15/10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

“generality” of the idea, of the value and the principle of reason; the factual contingency of the historical stands opposed to the supra-historical necessity of what is valid.<sup>16</sup> This opposition, to which the sheer, unassailable presence of the contingent gives rise, ‘calls into question the absolute and every purported knowledge of the absolute and its systematics’; it threatens to *explode* the absolute and to expose it as a mere superstition and fraud.<sup>17</sup>

But if history is the vital flux of time, it is nevertheless, *qua history*, understood as the entirety of the *past*, the sum of everything that ever was, the flow just insofar as it is over and done with. Now how does one apprehend the past as past, or conversely, how must the past be manifest such that it can be so apprehended at all? If we consider the matter in this light, it becomes clear that ‘history’ has the sense of that which constantly keeps itself available for an apprehending (any apprehending at all) that it does not itself require – the sense, in essence, of ‘a correlate of a theoretically idealizing determination that disregards

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 20/14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Does life not ‘prove that the assumption of something absolute and something valid is amiss and entirely superfluous’, merely ‘an unwarranted naïve exaggeration of one’s own contingent historical position, “one’s own wrong conclusion projected onto others” (Spengler)?’

every specific present':

The objective past: what has occurred thought as detached from any specific relation of historical apprehension, out of a specific historical present. 'Thought as': what is meant is therefore something thought, correlate of a being-thought, not according to its being real but according to its being a thing [*Gegenstand*] and being an object [*Objekt*]. The thinking in this manner is a theoretical determination, more exactly the positing of an idea, here that of history as past being.<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly the total sense-complex can be expressed as follows: by history as living history is meant a realm of *past objectivity*, objective 'being', over and against which stands, in an '*ideally conceived relation*' (a theoretical apprehension), an ideal and totally exterior subject or ego.

(3) Finally, regarding what Heidegger also refers to as the phenomenological 'dijudication': does this sense-complex, the ideal subject's standing over and against a domain of pure objectivity or 'being', in accordance with which life qua history is accessed and understood, come anywhere close to touching the primordially of the primordial? Here Heidegger establishes the criterion for judging the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 65/50.

primordially or non-primordially of enactments in the following (rather cumbersome) terms: an enactment is primordial to the extent that it requires 'an always actual renewal in a self-worldly being-there [*Dasein*]' that 'co-constitutes self-worldly existence [*Existenz*]'. In other words, and simply: is the enactment thought from out of the context of the genuine structural-ontological ground of concrete, factual-historical human being-there? With respect to the sense-complex under consideration here, the answer is: clearly not. This particular sense-complex 'stands furthest removed from concrete being-there [*Dasein*]'.<sup>19</sup> So far from requiring an actual renewal in self-worldly existence, the sense-complex that pits an ideal ego-thing as absolute observer against an always available object-matter rather *repels* worldly existence and in fact threatens to '*demolish*' it.<sup>20</sup> This is all the more ironic inasmuch as the problem of absolute *a priori* historical validity within which it is deployed has to do with discovering the ground precisely of *human* values and norms. It is therefore 'astonishing' that, in the context of the problem of the *a priori*, 'exactly that concept of history is guiding which is quite inappropriate for the philosophical basic tendency and is remote from it'.<sup>21</sup> And yet this is just what is required by the problem

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 75/57, 73/55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 86/66.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 73/56.

itself, such that the philosophy of history, given its particular orientation toward its subject matter, is from the beginning turned back against itself: 'The sense of history posited in the problem of the *a priori* persists precisely at the cost of explicitly pushing away that toward which the problem itself is aimed', viz., 'the human being in its concrete, individual historical being-there [*Dasein*].'<sup>22</sup>

If we now turn to the second topical axis – that of experience, 'the human being as something achieving, creating, experiencing life – *life as a manifold of lived experience*'<sup>23</sup> – we find that we encounter the same fundamental errors and inadequacies. Here, too, philosophy seeks an absolute, an *a priori*, but this time of the rational within the chaos of the irrational. Life is the stormy outside, the ceaseless flow of the 'categorially unformed' into which the 'I' is released and submerged; it is the immediacy of pure consciousness prior to the spontaneous formation of the ego by the intellect. At exactly the same time, however, it is just this logical formation itself that is held to be the truest expression of life. Therefore the problem is at bottom one of a *self-mediation* of life, i.e., life's coming to a theoretical apprehension and knowledge of itself from out of the tumult of its own immediacy. One aims for 'a theoretical shaping, a logical, formally guided mediation of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 86/66.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 88/70.



the unmediated immediate, respectively a rationalization of the irrational, a demolition or immobilization of life in the schema of concepts'.<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger approaches this problem group by way of an analysis of the philosophical psychology of Natorp and, to a lesser extent, the philosophy of Dilthey. With respect to these two examples we can then enquire, as before: within the general problem-horizon of the rationalization of the irrational, (1) what is the unified sense-complex of 'life' and 'lived experience', and (2) to what extent do these point in the direction of the genuinely primordial, i.e., to self-worldly existence in its factual-historical specificity?

(1) For Natorp, as Heidegger sees it, the sense-complex of 'life' is grounded in the notion of a radical 'constitution': '*the positing of the idea of constitution as the radical and universal guiding idea*'.<sup>25</sup> This idea, on the basis of which 'every question of consciousness and of lived experience is determined',<sup>26</sup> at once makes possible the overcoming of the problem of the irrational and sets the essential task and trajectory of philosophy. For the motive of the positing of constitution is a certain life-experience, viz., 'that instances of knowledge and fixations do not endure, that they

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 26/19.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 129/100.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 132/102. Cf. 130/100.

get disputed, that knowledge, in reflective thinking further, turns out to be dependent on the subject'.<sup>27</sup> Constitution is that by virtue of which this contingency of experience can be resolved in a final and fully rational, i.e., logical, law-like unity. It is 'logical radicalization', that is, 'being based on and uniformly determined in ultimate logical law complexes'.<sup>28</sup> Here the role of the 'I' is decisive, for the 'I' is nothing but 'the constituting one', the centrally residing force or 'agent' of constitution. It is the logical unity and unification of the complex, that 'from where the stream of lived experience receives its ultimate lawfulness'.<sup>29</sup> Thus the 'I' is never this or that concrete, factually particular 'I', which could only ever emerge as an object *within* consciousness; rather it is the 'problem ground' itself, the base 'I think' that silently accompanies all consciousness as the hidden source of its luminescence.<sup>30</sup> The 'I' as 'the unity of the stream of lived experience' is

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 139/107.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 137f./106.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 150/116: 'One can ask from where the stream of lived experience receives its ultimate lawfulness. One answers: from a "pure 'I'" from which the *typical* relations of the stream become understandable.' All lived experiences 'belong to an "I" that forms the unity of the complex of lived experience' and thus 'plays a role in every order complex.'

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 132f./102f.: "'I" and consciousness are an ultimate; each concrete

simply unthinkable inasmuch as it is itself 'underlying thinking' – i.e., a founding, theoretical knowing-thinking that thinks everything except itself.<sup>31</sup>

In this way constitution offers the possibility of an absolute perspective, a 'universal, radical, irrefutable and critical superiority': 'nothing escapes the strict systematics that can be developed from it'.<sup>32</sup> And precisely this 'strict systematics' is, for Natorp, the prerogative and ultimate goal of philosophy:

Philosophy completes itself as thinking of thinking and thereby attains a unitary problem sphere: consciousness in the correlative counter-direction of objectification and subjectification. That is a problem sphere which – subsumed under the idea of constitution – makes possible a strictly unitary systematics and conceptually grasps and in this way comprehends the all-ness of being and ought, the totality of the world.<sup>33</sup>

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separate "I" is constituted, i.e., pointing back towards the proper and ultimate "I".'

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 150/116, 132/102.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 138/107.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 137/106.

By means of such a total and unitary systematics, constitution attains a 'pure, radical and universal dominance': knowing is 'guaranteed in its universal achievement', while 'the predominance of theoretical consciousness within the whole problematic of spirit and reason is maintained'.<sup>34</sup>

(2) As for the question of primordality: here again, as with the problem of the historical *a priori*, we must respond in the negative: 'The radicalization of the theoretical in the idea of constitution in principle...never leads to concrete actual being-there [*Dasein*].'<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, everything, the subjective as well as the objective, is reduced to 'a complex of relationships, a subject matter-ness or thingly-ness in the broadest sense'. Philosophy, to the extent that it strives for a unitary logical systematics, dwindles to a mere 'theoretical attitude', a 'pushing away from the self-world', that is, a 'falling-away' of philosophy from itself. The Natorpian philosophy 'does not in any way co-constitute self-worldly, actual being-there [*Dasein*], but actually gives it up', i.e., 'is *not* primordial but has fallen away into an attitudinal character'. Thus '[in] no way is the enactment such that it constitutes the actual being-there [*Dasein*] of a concrete individual'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 141/109.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 142f./110.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 152/117f.

Finally, as for Dilthey: although it is true, in Heidegger's view, that he is much closer to the origin than Natorp, to the primordially of 'self-worldly being-there', nonetheless 'the moment of *constitution* also creeps its way into his philosophy'.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, at bottom, at 'the ultimate core of psychical unity', the human is grasped as nothing more than 'a bundle of feelings and drives', in which case 'mental reality is constructed in a circumstantial, objective and thingly way'. Lived experience is construed as understanding, but understanding itself is insufficiently problematized; 'life' is apprehended in a formal and aesthetic sense, with a 'tendency towards formal harmony' as that which determines individual consciousness. In sum, Dilthey 'intimates' something that he never quite manages to enact; he lacks an impulse toward what is ultimately necessary: a radical interrogation and reconfiguration of the basic concepts and categories. Dilthey's importance lies in his providing an orientation, in his being a sign pointing ahead to the primordial, but not in his being a thinker of the primordial itself.

#### B. SS 1923: *Ontology – Hermeneutics of Facticity*

In his final lecture course at Freiburg in the summer of 1923, titled

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 165ff./127ff.

simply 'Ontology', Heidegger recapitulates the destructive gesture initiated in the 1920 lectures, critically summarizing the self-apprehension of factual life with respect to its thematic treatment in the problem-domains of historical science and philosophy. Regarding the former, it 'accordingly places itself before the task of gaining an overview of "the total fact of man", i.e., bringing human being-there [*Dasein*] into view in an absolutely objective manner'.<sup>38</sup> As for philosophy, it is, according to Heidegger, presently obsessed with the task of a universal classification and typification of the totality of the real, the very undertaking of which requires that beings as such first be reduced to pure objects susceptible to constant manipulation and 'construction' by a thinking, calculating subject. Consequently, what passes for 'knowledge' is simply the subject's ability to file entities away, to allocate object-things to their proper places within sterile classificatory frameworks.<sup>39</sup>

Philosophy thus dwindles to an agitated '*being-everywhere-and-*

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<sup>38</sup> GA 63, 56/44.

<sup>39</sup> 'The basic tendency of the comporting is classifying and filing away', i.e., something is 'known when one has defined *where* it belongs, the place within the totality of the classificatory order *whereinto* it is to be inserted...' This and the following citations are from *ibid.*, §§12-13, 58-65/48-51.

*nowhere*', while knowledge becomes 'absolute curiosity'. Philosophy skims over the surface of life, assimilating everything it encounters to its classificatory order, which is not permanently fixed and immobile but rather grows and morphs with each new 'discovery'; in this way philosophy becomes 'the *objective* scientific kind of philosophy' in which "absolute truths" free of standpoints are brought to light'. Such objectivity serves to protect being-there from the difficult labour of actual thinking, instead letting it rest comfortably and complacently in 'the tranquil certainty and security of the general and unanimous "yes, I agree"'.

In short, what both history and philosophy aim for is life as the *objectively determined*, factual life itself as '*having itself objectively there for itself, bringing itself objectively into its there*':

In both modes of interpretation, Dasein is encountering itself exactly as it is in itself, free of standpoints. Historical consciousness lets Dasein be encountered in the entire wealth of the objective being of its *having-been*, while philosophy lets it be encountered in the immutability of its *always-being-in-such-a-manner*. Both directions of interpretation bring Dasein itself before its highest and purest *present*.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 65/51.

It is precisely this attempt to capture life in some static, neutral, standpoint-free and therefore purely objective state, to freeze it in place once and for all, that conceals the originary phenomenon of factual life as the concreteness of actual living.

### C. Objectification as the problem-horizon of life

On the basis of the above analysis, it is clear that the manifold self-projections of life converge on the image of the *object*. Moreover, it is equally clear that object-ness and objectification are by no means restricted to the 'object' in the narrow sense, but rather involve the whole subject-object schema. In short, what is at issue is life just insofar as it is encountered in the same way one encounters *things on hand*, things in their thingliness, whether as the thing encountered or the encountering thing, i.e., whether as a realm of self-standing actuality (history, development, flux, process) or as the *ego cogito* that stands over and against that actuality and constitutes it, masters it in theoretical knowledge (the object for a subject or the subject for itself, as Heidegger says elsewhere). Taken in this way, life is reduced to a collection of individual experiential 'facts', the subject matter par excellence for a scientific analysis.<sup>41</sup> Every such objectifying projection distorts and

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<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., GA 17, 274/211.



obscures the primordial reality of life as lived life, and indeed all the more so to the extent that it passes itself off as the genuinely primordial.

Long before the being-question takes hold and claims priority, it is this frustration with the perniciousness of objectification, with the distorting effects of the positing and objectifying of life, that constitutes the main impetus and focus of Heidegger's work; it is at the core of his investigations into the neo-Kantianism, psychology, life-philosophy and phenomenology of the day on the one hand, and his return to the Greeks, and above all to Aristotle, on the other. On this topic one could cite abundantly from the pre-*Being and Time* lectures. For example, from SS 1923:

From the very start, [philosophy's] theme is *object-being*, i.e., the objectivity of definite objects, and the object as it is given for an indifferent theoretical meaning, or a material object-being for the particular sciences of nature and culture concerned with it, and if necessary, by means of the regions of objects, the world, but not from out of being-there [*Dasein*] and its possibilities...What results from this: it blocks access to that being which is decisive within philosophical problems: namely, being-there [*Dasein*], from out of which and for the sake of which, philosophy 'is'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> GA 63, 3/2.

And again, later in the same text:

[The subject-object schema] fundamentally and forever obstructs access to that which we have indicated with the term 'factual life' (*'being-there'* ['Dasein']). No modification of this schema would be able to do away with its inappropriateness.<sup>43</sup>

And yet again, from SS 1924:

[The] orientation toward subject and object must be fundamentally set aside...With the subject/object distinction, one does not get at the facts of this matter; the basic phenomenon of being-in-the-world does not come into view.<sup>44</sup>

Such passages could be multiplied several times over. In every case it is a matter of assessing the tendency of a certain discourse, and above all of every 'life'-related discourse, to thingify life, to conjure up something apparition behind which life is able to hide from and therefore avoid itself.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 81/63.

<sup>44</sup> GA 18, 56f./40.

### III. The original sense-content of life: the '*it lives/worlds*'

The totality of life's objectifying-projecting activity can be gathered under the figure of the 'theoretical' as the proper name for the objectifying gaze itself. Life exhibits, as Heidegger says in one of his earliest texts, the SS 1919 course titled *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 'a deeply ingrained obsession with the theoretical'<sup>45</sup> that stems from life's strange desire to flee from itself. Theory is not the source of the projections but only their medium; it is the peculiar kind of self-looking (re-flection) through which life's thingly self-apprehension and self-positing is accomplished. The theorizing of life (in the double sense) is in every case a 'de-interpretation' and a 'de-vivification' of life, the denaturing of life, its reduction to something merely 'real', a 'residue' of its actual, factual plenitude; de-vivification is 'the essence of the *theoretical form*', the unity of the manifold forms of thingification.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, if life is to be reconciled with itself, it must

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<sup>45</sup> GA 56/57, 88/74.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 89f./75f. Cf. Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 120: Phenomenology must always steer clear of 'the "unliving" of reification that especially the natural sciences promote in their quest for total objectification. Clearly, the science of the origin wishes to stay close to

first be rescued from every *theory of life* in the proper sense. It is not this or that object but the objective as such, the product of theory, that is the idol to be smashed.

All the same, destruction is never a *mere* demolishing and laying waste; it is also a clearing away and a revealing that lets the things themselves emerge and be seen in their full positivity, as they really are. Destruction is always and essentially productive. In this case, however, it is precisely the positivity and actuality of the object, its abiding thingly presence, that is to be destroyed. Thus we can say that the destruction negates the positivity of the object while producing and elevating the negativity of true life in its actual positivity. In other words, negativity and positivity are inverted: what is produced is the negativity of the non-objective as the most positive determination of life. *Non-objectivity, non-thingliness, constitutes the ultimate meaning and grounding sense of life.* Life as such *is*, in its very being, the primordial non-objective. It is the pure openness or nothingness of the *es lebt*, 'it lives' – or, what amounts to the same thing, insofar as all living is *world-living*, the *es weltet*, 'it worlds', the simple happening of life as the

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the original situation of life. In fact, it seeks the givenness of concrete basic situations in which the totality of life is expressed, in which a "total givenness" emerges. This is the givenness of life as it is "pregiven" to us, which can never and in no way be objectified.'

'worlding' of the lifeworld.<sup>47</sup> Openness, in other words, is not a function of a being-in-the-world that would be a being-amidst-beings; it is rather and simply that living is equivalent to the opening up of a world as something like a general horizon of 'mattering'. Expressed in a single word that will become, much later on and in a radically transformed sense, the motto of Heideggerian thought as a whole, life is an '*Er-eignis*', the event of the 'meaningful' self-appropriation of the pure openness of life, i.e., life's living/worlding itself.<sup>48</sup> Theoretical life, by contrast, is the thoroughly inappropriate, 'the absolutely world-less, world-foreign', a 'sphere which takes one's breath and where no one can live'.<sup>49</sup>

It is precisely this rescuing of life from theory that constitutes the proper task of philosophy as phenomenology and makes it primordial science. Life stands at the brink of an *abyss*, the chasm of an 'absolute reification', a pure thingification, from which it can only pull back by

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<sup>47</sup> GA 61, 85f./65. The terms 'life' and 'world', Heidegger says, are synonymous and thus interchangeable, i.e., such that 'to live my life' means the same thing as 'to live my world'. Cf. GA 56/57, 66/56, 73/61, 94/79.

<sup>48</sup> GA 56/57, 69/58: '(Characterization of the lived experience as event [*Er-eignis*] – meaningful, not thing-like.)'

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 112/95.

means of a *leap* into the thick of the very *it lives/worlds* it has abandoned. Philosophy is nothing but the leaping of this leap; as a 'hermeneutics of facticity', philosophy brings the *it lives/worlds* to a fundamental self-interrogation and self-interpretation. In other words, philosophy is not simply human activity (one amongst innumerable activities), still less a 'method' for solving problems, but rather the self-leaping-back-into-life of life itself, life's self-recoiling from the nothingness of reification back into the nothingness of actual living, that is to say, back into the world in all its factual concreteness.<sup>50</sup>

#### IV. The unity and universality of the *it lives/worlds*

When we consider the sense-content of life in this fashion, i.e., from out of its original problem-nexus and not as determined by the question of being, we see that a natural and perfectly unremarkable consequence follows, namely this: that just because the ultimate meaning of factual life is, not the 'there' of being, but rather the sheer, radical openness of the *it lives/worlds*, life turns out to be an entirely unitary phenomenon. Factual life, in other words, is *life as such*, the mode of being of *every* entity that *is* in the manner of living, i.e., in a non-thingly or openly sort of way. *Life is universal life* – and it is precisely for *this* reason that

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 63/53.

Heidegger is adamant that being-in-the-world applies just as originally and essentially to animals (and perhaps, in certain restricted ways, to plants). In no sense can life, which quite obviously characterizes the human way to be – and completely irrespective of the fact that it is only in its human incarnation that life can flee and fall away from itself – be separated out and held apart from some wholly other and totally exterior way to be, some other ‘life’, that would apply strictly to non-human living beings; to the contrary, if any entity of whatever sort lives, then having a world in the manner of a disclosive concernfulness or ‘matteringness’ is the most precise sense-content of its living; it *is* in the most authentic sense of the primordial *it worlds*. As Heidegger says in his Kassel lectures of 1924-5:

[The] primal givenness of being-there [*Dasein*] is that it is in a world. Life is that kind of reality which is in a world and indeed in such a way that it has a world. Every living creature has its environing world not as something extant next to it but as something that is there [*da ist*] for it as disclosed, uncovered. For a primitive animal, the world can be very simple. But life and its world are never two things side by side; rather, life ‘has’ its world. Even in biology this kind of knowledge is slowly beginning to make headway. People are now reflecting on the fundamental structure of the animal. But we miss the essential thing here if we don’t see that the animal has a

world. In the same way, we too are always in a world in such a way that it is disclosed for us. An object such as a chair, for example, is merely extant; all life, on the other hand, is there [*ist da*] in such a way that a world also is there for it.<sup>51</sup>

Life is world-openness, disclosive in-being. Every living being qua living has or *is* its 'there', its *Da*, inasmuch as it lives. Unconcealment is constitutive of human beings and animals alike as the 'fundamental structure' of 'all life'. The animal is not stranded on the far side of an 'abyss of essence' but rather falls on the very same life-spectrum as the human; living beings are separated from each other only by degrees of intricacy and complexity, and therefore potentiality: animal life is 'simple', 'primitive' in comparison with human life (indeed it is worth noting that the animal is here the privileged term of the comparison: 'in the same way, we too...', i.e., just like the animal).

In his SS 1925 lectures titled *History of the Concept of Time* Heidegger gives an example of one such 'primitive animal', the snail:

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<sup>51</sup> *Supp.*, 163. Cf. GA 17, 105f./76: 'Being-there [*Dasein*] as *being in a world* (being-in) is being that discloses. What is expressed by the phrase "in a world" is not that two objects are related in some way to one another but instead that the specific being of living beings [*des Lebenden*] is grounded on *having* the world in the manner of taking care of it.'



[The phenomenon of in-being] may be clarified by an analogy which itself is not too far removed from the matter at issue, inasmuch as this analogy is concerned with an entity to which we must likewise attribute, in a formal way, the kind of being which belongs to being-there [*Dasein*] – ‘life’... We can say that the snail at times crawls out of its shell and at the same time keeps it on hand: it stretches itself out to something, to food, to some things which it finds on the ground. Does the snail thereby first enter into a relationship of being with the world? Not at all! Its act of crawling out is but a local modification of its already-being-in-the-world. Even when it is in its shell, its being is a being-outside, rightly understood. It is not in its shell like water in the glass...it is such that it has a world. The snail is not at the outset only in its shell and not yet in the world, a world described as standing over against it, an opposition which it broaches by first crawling out. It crawls out only insofar as its being is already to be in a world. It does not first add a world to itself by touching. Rather, it touches because its being means nothing other than to be in a world.<sup>52</sup>

This is neither ‘flabbergasting’<sup>53</sup> nor contradictory. As a living being, the

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<sup>52</sup> GA 20, 223f./165f.

<sup>53</sup> David Krell finds it thus only because he does not take into account the proper horizon of problematization of life as openness versus

snail partakes of factual life inasmuch as facticity qua in-ness constitutes the very being of life. The caveat that this applies to the snail only 'formally' does *not* mean that the snail partakes of some wholly other and thus inaccessible mode of being that we can only grasp on the model of factual life; rather it implies that the peculiar sort of in-being characteristic of the snail's life is radically (but not essentially) different from that which characterizes our own human life. The snail's crawling, stretching and poking around are indicative of a primitive, rudimentary and, for us, alien form of in-being, but *as life* it is still in-being nonetheless.<sup>54</sup>

We see that there is as yet no conundrum of 'access' to life and the living, but rather only a profound difficulty, perhaps insurmountable, of coming to grips with lesser degrees of life, in-ness, openness, etc. To

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thingliness, but sees it instead as a kind of onto-theological phobia of a quasi-conceptual 'life' the being of which he simply takes for granted (and does not elaborate on) at the outset. Everywhere Krell sees Heidegger's text undermining and deconstructing itself, when in fact it obeys a fairly rigorous and consistent order. See David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 89f.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death & Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 14f., also 99f.

take up and engage this difficulty is the proper task of biology – but only insofar as biology takes its directive from philosophy and indeed *becomes* philosophy as primordial science, i.e., as phenomenology of factual life:

We can arrive at the biological basis of human being – i.e., the basic structure of our ‘biological being’ in the narrow sense – only if beforehand we have already understood ‘biological being’ as a structure of existence [*Dasein*, i.e., being-in-the-world in the most general sense]. It does not work in reverse. We cannot derive the determination ‘being-in-the-world’ from biology. It must be acquired philosophically. This means that even biology *qua* biology cannot see the structures of ‘biological being’ in its specific objects, for *qua* biology it already presupposes such structures when it speaks of plants and animals. Biology can establish and determine these structures only by transgressing its own limits and becoming philosophy. And in fact more than once in the course of the development of modern biology, especially in the nineteenth century (although only in very general characterizations and vague concepts), biologists have referred to this structure and to the fact that animals above all, and plants in a certain sense, have a world.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> GA 21, 215/181.

This is a radical claim. Heidegger is essentially saying that life, *sensu stricto*, is the exclusive province, not at all of biology as the 'science of life', but always and only of philosophy as phenomenology. The 'life' that biology takes for its subject matter is only genuinely interpreted phenomenologically, viz., as being-in-the-world. Therefore biology is, with respect to what is primordial, a congenitally deficient science; it unreflectively takes over and makes use of certain insights the real meaning and import of which it is itself completely ignorant inasmuch as it lacks the requisite fundamental concepts, which are attainable only through phenomenology. Consequently, at the very moment that biology came to an authentic apprehension of its own subject matter, it would no longer be biology but rather philosophy; conversely, philosophy is *authentic biology*. A 'fundamental biology' is an oxymoron; such a thing would be achievable only by means of a self-negating transgression in the direction of philosophy.

In any case we see that, whether through philosophy or a philosophized biology, knowledge of life is possible by means of an analogical reduction or abstraction from human life, i.e., a process of de-complexification or thinning-out of full, existential life in order to arrive, at least formally, at a barer, more skeletal modality of that very same life. As Heidegger writes in SS 1925:

It is only when we have apprehended the objectivity of the world

which is accessible to us, that is to say, our relationship of being toward the world, that we can perhaps also determine the worldhood of the animal by certain modified ways of considering it. The reverse procedure does not work, inasmuch as we are always compelled to speak on the basis of the analogy in analyzing the environing world of the animals.<sup>56</sup>

We cannot climb up from the animal's world to our own world, just as we cannot descend from more primitive forms of life down to single-celled life, since we can only imagine the animal's world in the first place from out of the resources of our own life-experience. We can, however, begin with our own experience and then 'modify' it to arrive at the animal's unique sort of worldliness. Modification thus implies a lessening or simplifying insofar as there is only one world at issue, that is to say, insofar as world and worldhood are employed in their richest sense: as *the world of life itself*.

#### V. Animal life in the Aristotle lectures

This puts us in a position to understand better Heidegger's several remarks on animals and animal life in his courses on Aristotle

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<sup>56</sup> GA 20, 305/222.

(especially SS 1924 and SS 1926). Here we see that Heidegger is neither simply interpreting Aristotle's text (in the sense of 'getting ideas' from it) nor interjecting foreign concepts and theories into it, but rather *recovering* its properly phenomenological truth in a way that was not possible for Aristotle himself. As Heidegger says at one point of this 'fusion of horizons': 'Indeed this already goes beyond Aristotle, but it is necessary for understanding him'.<sup>57</sup>

There are five main things to note here:

(1) Life as such is a primordial being-in-the-world in the sense of a having of the world:

*Zωή* is a *concept of being*; 'life' refers to a *mode of being*, indeed a mode of *being-in-a-world*. A living thing is not simply at hand (*vorhanden*), but is in a world in that it has its world. An animal is not simply moving down the road, pushed along by some mechanism. It is in the world in the sense of having it.<sup>58</sup>

This having of the world is a kind of *αἴσθησις*, but this word 'is not to be translated as "sensation", for it simply means the "perceiving" [*Vernehmen*] of the world, the mode of having-it-there' – it is, in a word,

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<sup>57</sup> GA 22, 208/169.

<sup>58</sup> GA 18, 18/14.

the 'disclosedness', *Erschlossenheit*, of life.<sup>59</sup> Disclosedness entails an essential 'abiding', *Aufenthalt*, amidst and with entities; it is a 'primary and primitive being-in', or simply, a 'dwelling', *wohnen*.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, insofar as this disclosive abiding is not that of a subject vis-à-vis an object but rather that of the self-living/worlding of life itself, world-having is always at the same time a self-having or a self-finding, a '*Befindlichkeit*': every living being 'is characterized by this determinability, a *finding-oneself*: not merely being-at-hand with others, but rather *maintaining oneself with it, being open to the world of itself as living thing, through this keeping oneself*'.<sup>61</sup>

(2) If all life is disclosive world-having (in-being = dwelling), then it is also true there are degrees or levels of complexity or intensity of such having/dwelling. Thus, for example, life for animals 'is characterized

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 52/37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 381/258: '*Abiding, being-in* precisely the there of living. A stone does not abide, it happens. But an animal: "It abides" in its heart! Θιγεῖν and ἀφή: primary and primitive being-in. "Dwelling"!...Primary hermeneutical category, not at all spatial as to be contained, contained in...With-which of abiding!'

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 325f./220. Cf. 54/38: '*All modes of living are characterized by the fact that, here, the mode of being is a matter of finding-oneself in the mode of being-in-a-disposition-and-bringing-oneself-therein.*'

through φωνή, and for human beings through λόγος' – the only difference between these being that 'in λόγος, what is living-in-a-world appropriates the world, has it there, and genuinely is and moves in this having-it-there'.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the real division is not between human life and animal life (as though these lay on opposite sides of a void), but always and only between life as such and non-life:

Everything that is alive, to the extent that it exists, has a *world*, which does not hold for what is not alive. Every living being is oriented to something, pursues it, avoids it, etc. To be sure, that may happen indeterminately. Thus we can comprehend protozoa and other forms of life only indirectly, in analogy with ourselves. By the very fact that a living being discloses a world, the being of this being is also disclosed to it. It knows about itself, even if only in the dullest way and in the broadest sense. Along with the disclosure of the world, it is disclosed to itself.<sup>63</sup>

The self-discovery and disclosedness of the living/worlding of life is always 'to an extent...', ranging from the dullest and most general self-awareness of protozoa up to the 'existential' self-appropriation of life

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 52/37 ('genuinely' = *eigentlich*).

<sup>63</sup> GA 22, 207f./169.



that characterizes the human (thus again we see the possibility of an analogical comprehension of primitive forms of life, i.e., of a kind of reductive onto-biology). Heidegger had already stressed this point a year earlier in SS 1925:

A stone never finds itself but is simply on hand. A very primitive unicellular form of life, on the contrary, will already find itself, where this disposition can be the greatest and darkest dullness, but for all that it is in its structure of being essentially distinct from merely being on hand like a thing.<sup>64</sup>

Even though the unicellular organism encounters itself in the manner of 'the greatest and darkest dullness', such a dullness nonetheless remains a mode of *Befindlichkeit*. Because it lives, the unicellular organism has necessarily a kind of 'relucence' within which it is able to find itself in a manner that is totally and essentially impossible for something merely on hand such as a stone. The stone's darkness and dullness are of an entirely different *kind*; in the same way, the unicellular organism's darkness and dullness are not properties of some non-life mode of being, but rather characterize life, in-ness, in its barest and most primitive state. The human is simply a more *advanced* form of life than,

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<sup>64</sup> GA 20, 352/255.

e.g., the amoeba; from the amoeba to the snail to the human we have a steady enhancement and complexification of one and the same factual life, one and the same reluctant, disclosive being-in-the-world (it makes no sense, by contrast, to say that the human is more advanced than the stone).

(3) The specific kind of αἴσθησις peculiar to animal life is not a νοῦς, a pure observation or theoretical knowing, but rather an ὄρεξις, a ‘desiring’ as a yearning or longing going-out-toward an ὀρεκτόν, a ‘desirable’. Desire indicates the way in which the world *matters* to animals; it takes the form of a δίωξις or a φύξις/φύγη, a pursuit or avoidance (or flight), depending on the relative desirability or undesirability of the mattering entity. Accordingly the world that animals have access to and in which they find themselves is a zone of the διακείμενον and ἀντικείμενον, the thing-to-pursue and the thing-to-avoid. There is nothing like deliberation involved; rather the going-out-toward-the-ὀρεκτόν just *is* the very deliberating discrimination itself:

[How] is this ὀρεκτόν, the ‘desirable’, made accessible, and what are the basic modes of conation? Φεύγειν and διώκειν, on the one hand, to ‘make for’ something, to pursue an object, and on the other hand, to ‘avoid’ it. With the living being, what is, formally speaking, the mover itself, the ἀρχὴ κινήσεως? Aristotle shows that the point of

departure for the motion is not the pure and simple observation of a desirable object. This object is not grasped through αἴσθησις but, instead, through ὄρεξις: the ‘conation’ has the function of disclosing. Only on the basis of the ὀρεκτόν is there deliberation, κρίνειν, διάνοια. It is not the case that the living being first observes things disinterestedly, merely looks about in a neutral attitude, and then moves toward something; on the contrary, ὄρεξις is fundamental. The ἀρχή is the unity of κρίνειν and κινεῖν; that is the principle of motion for living beings. Αἴσθησις for animals, νοῦς for humans. The αἴσθησις of animals is not a theoretical capacity; on the contrary, it exists in a context of pursuit and flight.<sup>65</sup>

Closely associated with ὄρεξις is ἡδονή, pleasure or favourability. The to-be-pursued or to-be-avoided is ἡδύ or λυπηρόν, pleasurable (favourable) or painful. But these are not mere ‘qualities’ that attach to object-things that get apprehended through ‘observation’; rather they designate the character of the world itself as animals really have it: ‘Living as being-in-a-world finds itself characterized by ἡδονή insofar as the ἡδύ is *there*. For animals, encountering the world in the character of the ἡδύ is, for example, encountering a favourable feeding place and not a symphony. It is always something that is in the animal’s

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<sup>65</sup> GA 22, 309f./228.

surrounding world.’<sup>66</sup>

(4) Because the animal has a world and is invested in its world, i.e., finds itself and invests itself in its world, in however primitive and rudimentary a fashion, to that extent the animal possesses understanding, *Verständnis*, and indeed even *truth*, ἀλήθεια: if ‘[to] say that something is understood means that it is *manifest* in its being such and such’, then it naturally follows, if animals live and hence are disclosive, that understanding ‘also belongs to the mode of being of animals’.<sup>67</sup> But what does this ‘manifest in its *being* such and such’ mean? It does not mean, to be sure, that the animal has beings as such, beings qua beings, that the animal’s *Verständnis* is a *Seinsverständnis* – to the contrary, the ἡδύ and λυπηρόν are not pleasurable and painful *beings*, but only ‘the pleasurable’ and ‘the painful’ in themselves. In other words, and crucially, it means that the animal’s ὄρεξις corresponds to a form of manifestation that is entirely independent of the sort of being-manifestation implicated in the human λόγος. There exists an *autonomous orectic form of manifestation* (‘...the “conation” has the function of disclosing...’) that is not equivalent or reducible to, or conditional upon, the manifestation of *be-ing*; things can stand

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<sup>66</sup> GA 18, 53/38. Also 54/38: ‘[The] ἡδύ is encountered by an animal that already is in the mode of finding-itself in the world.’

<sup>67</sup> GA 22, 207f./169.

unconcealed, can stand in a certain kind of truth, and yet not 'be' anything at all. Likewise the animal can understand these things even though it does not apprehend them 'as' 'beings'. All the same, insofar as it does understand them, it must indeed have them 'as' they manifest themselves, in which case we should have to say that the animal possesses something like an 'as' of desire – an orectic *as*, if you like. Pursuit and flight are always oriented understandingly to what discloses itself *as* favourable or threatening, *as* desirable or undesirable, *as* διακείμενον or ἀντικείμενον, the to-go-after or the to-flee-from. Here αἴσθησις as ὄρεξις takes the form of ἀφή, 'contact':

An animal is there, an ant crawls up the trunk so that it has the trunk in a certain way *as its obstacle*, so that the trunk with which it is there is nonetheless there for it as διακείμενον, ἀντικείμενον [something to which it is disposed or opposed] for the animal through ἀφή, through 'contact'. This being, as animal, has that with which it is still *there*; the πρὸς τι is characterized by the ἀντί...such that what the living thing is related to is there as uncovered, perceived, seen, or thought.<sup>68</sup>

The orectic *as* is more originary than either the ontological,

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<sup>68</sup> GA 18, 325f./220 (some emphasis added).

hermeneutical, apophantic or assertoric *as*, and yet this *as* also belongs fundamentally to life and is perhaps the most basic of all.

(5) Finally, precisely because the animal has its world unconcealed and, we may say, pre-articulated for it in this way – i.e., *as* ὄρεκτόν, ἡδύ, λυπηρόν, διακείμενον, ἀντικείμενον – there belongs to animal living a commensurate form of indicating or signalling that takes the form of an enticing or warning. By means of such signalling, i.e., φωνή, the mattering entity is pointed out as pleasure-inducing or pain-inducing, to-pursue or to-avoid, etc.:

This being that is there in the character of mattering-to-animals is *indicated*, animals give a ‘sign’, σημεῖον. It *indicates* beings that are there with the character of the ἡδύ. The indicating gives no report about the being-at-hand of what is pleasing outside in nature, but rather this indicating and crying out is itself an *enticing* or a *warning*.<sup>69</sup>

But although φωνή is not an exhibiting or manifesting – never an observing-ascertaining of beings ready to hand but rather only a pure indicating ‘within the orbit of [animals’] animalistic having-to-do’ – still it is a kind of showing or illuminating of the ‘there’ *as structured by the orectic as*, viz., in terms of ἡδύ and λυπηρόν: ‘Since animals indicate the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 54f./39.

threatening, or alarming, and so on, they signal, in this indicating of the being-there of the world, their being in a world. The world is indicated as ἡδύ and, at the same time, it is a signalling of being, being-threatened, having-found, and so on'<sup>70</sup> (that is, not a signalling of being itself, being qua being, but only of the animal's own being-in-the-world as a being-threatened, being-discovered, being-in-pursuit, etc.).

The *ground* of φωνή as enticement and warning is the animal's co-belonging with other animals in its world, its *being-with* other animals, such that φωνή has 'the character of *addressing itself to...*', viz., to the others which it encounters and engages in the with-world. Accordingly enticing and warning, as determined by being-with-one-another, are a bringing-together and repelling, drawing-others-close-by and pushing-others-away:

Enticing means to bring another animal into the same disposition; warning is the repelling from this same disposition. Enticing and warning as *repelling* and *bringing*, in themselves, have in their ground *being-with-one-another...*[which] becomes manifest precisely in the specific being-character of animals as φωνή.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. (emphasis added).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

## VI. The perverseness of the definition *animal rationale*

If it is true, as we have been insisting, that plants, animals and human beings are separated from each other merely by differences of degree in the richness of the peculiar sort of in-ness that each lives – if every living being qua living is a worldly being-there, a 'Dasein', at a different stage of development – then this seems perfectly compatible with the traditional definition of the human as an *animal rationale*, a living being that happens to be endowed with certain special faculties that serve to distinguish it from other living beings. And yet this is the very definition of the human that Heidegger flatly repudiates. Accordingly, before we proceed to consider the process by which factual life is split into the antithetical modes of being of existence and life, it will prove instructive to show why, for Heidegger, the concept of the *animal rationale* is untenable and therefore disqualified.

Let us turn once again to SS 1925, in particular to Chapter 3, §§10-13, the twofold aim of which is an elucidation of the nature and structure of pure consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology, as well as a critical exposition of Husserl's purported 'neglect' of both the question concerning the being of the intentional and of the 'intentional entity' (i.e., the human), and the question of the meaning of being itself. Heidegger's main objection in these sections is that the problem of the being of the intentional is not raised at all, indeed is not even capable of



being raised (it is 'absurd', 'nonsensical'), within the field that Husserl actually succeeds in securing, viz., pure consciousness (by contrast, the question of the meaning of being as such is a 'fundamental omission', i.e., a sense of the question itself is lacking).<sup>72</sup> This problem must be pursued in the domain of the natural attitude, in the factual existence-experience of the concrete individual. However, the natural attitude is precisely what Husserl has to give up in order to secure the rarefied domain of pure consciousness. Husserl moves away from a consideration of the phenomena in their concrete factual self-givenness and in the direction of their ideation, their constitution by acts grasped in their universality. In this sense, according to Heidegger, even the phenomenological reduction itself is a highly *un*-phenomenological move.<sup>73</sup>

But it is not simply a matter of getting back to the natural attitude prior to the reduction; things are more complicated. In fact the difficulty concerns not only 'the determination of the region as such, the characterization of pure consciousness',<sup>74</sup> but additionally the very 'naturalness' of the natural attitude itself. For something is *presupposed* about the natural attitude, about its purported 'reality', that is 'totally

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<sup>72</sup> GA 20, 157f./113f.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 150/109.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 155/112f.

unnatural'. Even if 'the intentional at first ought to be given precisely as that which is then disregarded in ideation', even if it is invoked 'only to be immediately set aside, the intentional is here nonetheless experienced in its reality' – but what mode of *being* is attributed to this reality?

– that of real occurrences in the world, living beings which are objectively on hand, which in accord with their being are inserted into the 'fundamental layer' of all reality, into material thingness. The being of the intentional, the being of acts, the being of the psychic is thus fixed as a real worldly occurrence just like any natural process.<sup>75</sup>

As for 'the region of *pure lived experiences*, of *pure consciousness with its pure correlates*, the region of the *pure ego*', here too I am given to myself as "'a real object like others in the natural world" [Husserl, *Ideas I*, §33], that is, like houses, tables, trees, mountains. Human beings thus occur *realiter* in the world, among them I myself. I perform acts (*cogitationes*). These acts belong to the "human subject", hence are "occurrences of the same natural reality".<sup>76</sup> Precisely because the guiding intent of the phenomenological reduction is to secure a domain that can serve as the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 153/111.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 131f./95f.

ground of all scientific enquiry taken in the traditional sense as investigation into the real in its reality, the being of this 'reality', i.e., being itself, 'is equated with being a possible domain for treatment by a science'.<sup>77</sup> The phenomenological maxim is thus stood on its head: 'to the things themselves' means essentially: only 'insofar as they come into question as the theme of a science'.<sup>78</sup> Accordingly the being of the human is also thought within this horizon; the human is woven into the contexture of the real, apprehended as one more real thing 'objectively on hand'. That is to say, the human is subordinated to a wholly traditional agenda and grasped by means of wholly traditional themes and concepts; it is never considered as it is *as such*, outside of this agenda and these concepts. Therefore the human can only ever appear as something contingent and dependent vis-à-vis pure consciousness, or as Husserl says, as 'a being which has the mere secondary and relative sense of a being *for* a consciousness',<sup>79</sup> one that is 'transcendent' in the

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<sup>77</sup> GA 17, 257/198. Cf. 270ff./208ff.: '[All] interest here is diverted directly to forming a basic science and to considering the entity from the outset with a view to its suitability as the theme of this basic science. Being in the sense of *being a region for science* misplaces more than ever the possibility of letting the entity be encountered in its character of being.'

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 274/211.

<sup>79</sup> GA 20, 154f./112.

sense of a relative empirical unity, part and parcel of everything that is separated from the absolute immanence of pure consciousness as ‘the sphere of being of absolute origins’.

Now there are two principal ways in which the human is apprehended in its being as the objective on hand. On the one hand, the human can be taken as a ‘ζῷον’, a ‘zoological’ entity. A ζῷον is an occurrent ‘thing of nature’, a ‘living being’ in ‘[the] broadest sense as an object of nature’, where ‘nature’ signifies a theoretical position ‘in which every entity is taken *a priori* as a lawfully regulated flow of occurrences in the spatio-temporal exteriority of the world’.<sup>80</sup> As a ζῷον, the human is a material-organic agglomeration of flows and processes within the overall restricted economy of such processes comprising ‘the natural world’; accordingly, what this definition points to ‘is merely [the human’s] being on hand as a thing, *to which* compartments are perhaps added as “appendages” but are not really relevant for determining’ its being. Thus it is only ‘qua thing-of-nature’ that the human ‘becomes the substratum for the determination of culture, history, and so forth’.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the human can be interpreted ‘spiritually’ or ‘personalistically’, as the whole person in his or her living personality, that is, in

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 155f./113. Cf. GA 2, 65/74: The being of the ζῷον/*animal* ‘is understood in the sense of occurring and being-present-at-hand.’

<sup>81</sup> GA 17, 272/209.

terms of 'unity formations' such as soul, personality, character, etc. (Heidegger is referring to the manuscript for *Ideas II*, which Husserl had recently sent him). For example, in Dilthey's psychology the person is taken as the agent of history, in Scheler as the performer of acts, and so on.

It matters not in the least that the personalistic interpretation is touted as the *anti-naturalistic* one, the person hailed as the 'counter-thrust' of nature (for example, Scheler ostensibly insists that the person is not a thing or an object). For even if it were not true (as Heidegger thinks it is) that the spirit or person is ultimately grounded, via the psychic, on the natural world, such that the *being* of the person is never given primordially, still one would always have to ask whether and in what sense 'the *being of the full concrete man*' could ever be pinned down in this sort of bricoleur fashion, as something '*assembled* from the being of the material substrate, of the body, and from the soul and the spirit' – as 'the *product* of the kinds of being of these layers of being'.<sup>82</sup> Indeed the personalistic interpretation only serves to establish the objectivity of the human ever more firmly: 'It certainly does not take man as a reality of nature, but he is still a *reality of the world which constitutes itself as transcendence in absolute consciousness*.'<sup>83</sup> In terms of its being, which is

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<sup>82</sup> GA 20, 172f./124f. Cf. GA 2, 64f./74.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 173f./125.

never in question, the person remains a thing on hand.

The reason why the personalistic approach could never, i.e., in principle, differ from the naturalistic one is because both are equally manifestations of one and the same traditional determination of the being of the human as the *animal rationale*. This definition, as the common root from which the others stem, says nothing more or less than this: that the human is *an extant thing on hand with properties*:

[In] the background of all questions about the intentional, the psychic, about consciousness, lived experience, life, man, reason, spirit, person, ego, subject, there stands the old definition of man as *animal rationale*. But is this definition drawn from experiences which aim at a primary experience of the being of man? Or does it not come from the experience of man as an extant thing of the world – *animal* – which has reason – *rationale* – as an intrinsic property? This experience does not necessarily have to be naturalistic in an extreme sense...it has a certain justification not merely for a zoological and physiological consideration of man.<sup>84</sup>

'Reason' means the faculty of theorizing and positing, of thingifying for the purposes of possessing and mastering – for example, in scientific

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

discourse. In objectifying beings as a whole, the human objectifies itself as both the objectifying being and the outcome of a process of objectification. Or as Heidegger puts it much later, in his *Parmenides* lectures of 1942-3:

*As animal rationale, man is the 'animal' that calculates, plans, turns to beings as objects, represents what is objective and orders it. Man comports himself everywhere to objects, i.e., to what stands over and against him. This implies man himself is the 'subject', the being that, positing itself on itself, disposes of its objects and in that way secures them for itself...Man is the living being that, by way of representation, fastens upon objects and thus looks upon what is objective, and, in looking, orders objects, and in this ordering posits back upon himself the ordered as something mastered, as his possession.*<sup>85</sup>

Whether interpreted zoologically or personalistically, whether in material, psychical or spiritual terms, the 'experiential and interrogative horizon' is delineated in advance and entirely by 'the most customary name for this entity, man: *homo animal rationale*'.<sup>86</sup> 'Animal' means 'thing', 'object': the ζῷον is the natural animal, the object-thing with

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<sup>85</sup> GA 54, 232/156.

<sup>86</sup> GA 20, 207/154.

natural properties; the person is the spiritual animal, the object-thing with spiritual properties – nature-thing and person-thing, things identical in their thingliness. The rational animal is not principally the paradoxical creature that torments Christianity – a strange coalescence of carnal drives and divine substance – but rather that on which this creature is ultimately grounded: the worldly object endowed with the special property or feature of reason.<sup>87</sup>

Accordingly the Heideggerian strategy will be to find a way back to what is held to be the authentically natural attitude – that is, in such a way that the being of life and of lived experience is not simply posited *a priori* and taken over unreflectively in submission to the traditional concerns and mandates of scientific enquiry, but rather is thought from out of the matters themselves in their self-presentation.<sup>88</sup> And if the definition *animal rationale* is to be shunned at all costs, this has nothing to do with the ‘animality’ of man, his supposed ‘bestial’ nature, and

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 133f./97: The stream of lived experience ‘is attached to a concrete unity in...psychophysical animal things. Consciousness...is always a consciousness in a man or animal. It makes up the psychophysical unity of an *animal* which occurs as a given real object.’ In this sense, even an animal could be reduced to the ‘*animal*’, to a natural object-thing with natural properties.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. GA 61, 189f./142.



everything to do with his objectivity, or at the very least, with the former only to the extent that it is a function of the latter.

Finally, that the life at issue here is indeed, as we have already shown, life *as such*, the life of the whole of the living qua living, is made perfectly clear by considering the way in which the definition *animal rationale*, on the basis of which both the ζῷον-thing and the person-thing are given, is already a gross distortion of the more originary Aristotelian ζῷον λόγον ἔχον. As Heidegger remarks in SS 1923:

The position which looked at man with the definition '*animal rationale*' as its guide saw him in the sphere of other beings-which-are-there with him in the mode of life (plants, animals) and indeed as a being which has language (λόγον ἔχον), which addresses and discusses its world – a world initially there for it in the dealings it goes about in its πρᾶξις, its *concern* taken in a broad sense. The latter definition '*animal rationale*', '*rational animal*', which was indifferently understood simply in terms of the literal sense of the words, covered up the intuition which was the soil out of which this definition of human being originally arose.<sup>89</sup>

Already in this early text Heidegger is quite explicit that the *animal*

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<sup>89</sup> GA 63, 27f./23.

*rationale* is an extreme perversion of the ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, that the former covers up the more originary intuition of the latter: here, that humans and all other living beings ('plants, animals') are there with each other in the world inasmuch as they are all alive, and that if the human is nonetheless distinct from these other living beings it is only because it happens to speak about its living and that wherein this living is lived out: the world. Later on, the sense of both 'living' and 'speaking' is twisted around: man's 'animality' does not situate him in the midst of living life along with the living as a whole, but rather reduces him to an observable object, a member of a particular genus and species, a speck of stardust caught up in the flux and flow of the material universe, while his 'rationality' refers to his special way of standing over and against the universe and contemplating it.

## VII. Conclusion

Under no circumstances should the fact that factual life (= pure in-being) is universal life mislead us into supposing that both human life and animal life are equally under consideration or that they carry equal weight; clearly they are not, and do not. For while it is true that it is life as such that constitutes the most proper subject matter for phenomenology, still there is always an emphasis, and this naturally falls on the human. It is never life insofar as it is held in common between human

and animal that is at issue, but rather and always life as it swings in the direction of the human, toward the existential end of the life-continuum.

All the same, the Heidegger of the 1920s paints an extremely rich and colourful picture of life as a whole, of life as a universal reality. *All* life is a being-situated disclosively and dispositionally with others in a world that matters in some definite way. For animals this means being situated in a zone structured by and articulated in terms of desirables-to-go-after and undesirables-to-flee-from. By contrast, the world-disclosure of human beings is conditioned by νοῦς, or rather λόγος, on the basis of which the human can ἀποφάνεσθαι, let be seen. 'The world is not then known only in the horizon of pursuit and flight; instead, beings in their being such and such are spoken of, determined, understood, conceptualized, and thereby grounded in their "what" and their "why". Humans have the possibility of understanding the ὄρεκτόν as the basis of their action and the motive of their decisions.'<sup>90</sup> This understanding of actions and motives from out of a having of 'beings in their being' is co-conditioned by the possession of an αἴσθησις χρόνου, a sense of time. For the human, the 'unity of κινεῖν and κρίνειν', of going-out-toward and deliberation, is determined not as ὄρεξις but rather 'through προαίρεσις, the possibility of "anticipating" something as the basis of action', i.e., through purposeful

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<sup>90</sup> GA 22, 310f./229.

choice. Accordingly the world is manifest to the human in terms not strictly of what is pleasurable and immediately satisfying, το ἡδύ, but rather and always of what is *possible*: humans 'can presentify το μέλλον ["the future"] as the possible and as that for the sake of which they can act'.

But if what we have said about the unity of life is true, this only renders even more strange and difficult the radically dualist viewpoint defended in WS 1929-30 – viz., that humans and animals are separated by an 'abyss of essence'. For in this case the metaphysics lectures must be viewed not simply as solidifying a position at which Heidegger had already more or less arrived, albeit unthematically, but rather as *completely overturning* a fundamental and deeply held conviction. The catalyst for this overturning is what we described at the outset of this chapter as the growing urgency of the being-question and the steady shifting of the problem-horizon of philosophy in that direction. Accordingly, the question we must now pose is this: why – and even more importantly, how – does this displacement of philosophy's problem-nexus from the (self-)recuperation of alienated, thingified life to the retrieval of the question of the meaning of being (and ultimately its elucidation) necessarily entail an absolute and permanent cleavage of factual life qua universal life?

## Chapter 2

### From Factual Life to Animality: the Divestment of Being-in-the-World

#### I. The persistence of the universal life view

It is often assumed that Heidegger's position in *Being and Time* with respect to life – especially given his well-known distinction between existence (*Existenz*) and so-called 'mere aliveness' (*Nur-noch-leben*) – is more or less identical to that of the WS 1929-30 lectures, if not as explicit or developed.<sup>1</sup> But in light of what we have just established as to the unity and universality of factual life, i.e., as the pure *it lives/worlds* as such as opposed to every objectification of life, this assumption has to be discarded. *Being and Time* neither presupposes nor advances any essential, unbridgeable chasm between life and existence, and in this sense Heidegger's *magnum opus* shows continuity with his earliest work. If we remove this deeply ingrained notion of a chasm from our minds, we see clearly that, in almost every instance in which 'life' is invoked,

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: the Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 17ff.

the text reveals a continued reliance on the idea of a single, unitary innerworldliness. Heidegger by no means eschews human life altogether, as he does in WS 1929-30 and virtually everywhere thereafter, but rather makes use of the more flexible and compromising notion of an 'existential life', that is, the idea of a general, primordial in-being within a lifeworld<sup>2</sup> that, for whatever reason and exclusively in the case of the human being, *transcends* itself – we might even say, 'dialectically' – in the direction of being itself and in that way morphs into existence proper, culminates in existentiality, in being-living. Wherever life is at stake, existence appears as a kind of '*aufgehoben*' or 'sublated' life, a way to be that has simultaneously overcome and retained life, which is precisely why existence can be described as at once ontologically distinct from<sup>3</sup> and fundamentally inseparable from life, why the existing human can always be viewed purely from the perspective of its bare life.<sup>4</sup> For existence just *is* life, or more precisely,

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<sup>2</sup> GA 2, 328/290: 'Life must be understood as a kind of being to which there belongs a being-in-the-world.'

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 67/75: 'Life is a mode of being all its own [*eine eigene Seinsart*].'

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 328/290: 'Even Dasein may be considered purely as life', in which case, e.g., in scientific discourse, 'Dasein moves into that domain of being which we know as the world of animals and plants.' Similarly, even the human's death can always be interpreted exclusively in terms

life living on in an essentially modified state. This is the prism through which we must view the concept of 'mere' aliveness, the very notion of which implies a single, unified life-continuum and which therefore must be seen not so much as an anti-existence as an *ante*-existence, a precursor to full-blown existence. Mere life is un-sublated, unfulfilled, uncomplicated life, a mode of being essentially higher than the brute thingliness of non-life and essentially lower than the 'Dasein' proper, the being-there in a world-of-beings, definitive of mature, existentialized life.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly *Being and Time*, like the early lectures and in total opposition to the WS 1929-30 lectures, does not recognize any great and terrible dilemma of 'access' to life, i.e., of the sort requisite for any biological investigation of life. Heidegger writes that

biology as a 'science of life' is founded upon the ontology of Dasein, even if not entirely. Life is a mode of being all its own; but *essentially it is accessible* only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by

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of its life, even while, at the same time, its existence denies it the possibility of ever simply perishing in the manner of, e.g., a plant: 'Dasein too "has" its death, of the kind appropriate to anything that lives', although, '*qua* Dasein, it does not simply perish.'

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 67/75: 'Life is not a mere being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein.'

way of a privative interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there can be anything like mere-aliveness.<sup>6</sup>

The point here is exactly the same as the one made in SS 1925, WS 1925-6, SS 1926 and elsewhere; it has to do with the possibility of an 'analogical' method of comprehending the being-in-the-world of more primitive and less complex life (e.g., that of snails and even protozoa). One can never start with the more rudimentary in-being of plants and animals and try to tack on structures in order to arrive at the richer existential life of human beings; rather one must always begin from this existential life itself, the life which we ourselves live and with which we are most familiar, and proceed negatively, subtractively, from there.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, there is a very real and vexing pragmatic or technical problem of how one might actually accomplish this 'privative interpretation', might actually manage to prescind from the complexity of worldly-existential in-being and the being-world in order to arrive at the more austere in-being and the sparser world of merely living entities (*Nurlebenden*). But *that* it can be done, at least in principle, is not at issue, that

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 66f./75 (emphasis added).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 78/84f. Macquarrie and Robinson get it right in their footnote: 'The point is that in order to understand life merely *as such*, we must make abstraction from the fuller life of Dasein.'



is to say, does not constitute a paradox; it is in no sense a matter of figuring out how to leap out of one self-contained, hermetically sealed mode of being into another mode, equally self-contained.

Even as late as 1927 Heidegger has not relinquished the old framework of life as a single desire-existence continuum, where the oretic pole is accessible by means of some procedure of abstraction from the existential pole. Thus we find in his summer lectures titled *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (comprising a major portion of the unpublished sections of *Being and Time*), buried in the middle of a discussion of Hobbes's theory of the copula, the following 'incidental remark':

We may remark incidentally that a great difficulty presents itself here, which is how to make out what is given to animals as living beings and how the given is unveiled [*enthüllt*] for them. Hobbes says that the given is not given to them as true or false because they cannot speak and make assertions about what is given to them. But he must surely say that the mirror-image is given to them *as* similar. The question would already obtrude here as to how far, in general, something can be given *as* something to animals. We also come here to the further question whether, in general, anything is given *as a being* to animals. It is as yet a problem to establish ontically how something is given to animals. On closer consideration we see that, speaking cautiously, since we ourselves are not mere animals, we

basically do not have an understanding of the 'world' of the animals. But since we nevertheless also live as existents...the possibility is available to us, by going back from what is given to us as existents, to make out reductively what could be given to an animal that merely lives but does not exist.<sup>8</sup>

We ourselves 'live as existents', while the animal 'merely lives but does not exist' (as Heidegger says earlier in the same text, 'existence' denotes only 'the being of the *human* Dasein and of its way of being'<sup>9</sup>). 'Mere' life is not distinguished from existence *as such*, i.e., as non-life, but rather and only from *existential life* as a higher, more complex form of life. For this reason it is entirely possible 'to make out reductively' how things are given to the animal, how it apprehends its world.

## II. Life as 'the mode of being of plants and animals'

The WS 1929-30 lectures mark a genuine reversal with respect to the thinking of the relation between life and existence. Existence now refers

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<sup>8</sup> GA 24, 270f./190f.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 74/54 (emphasis added). Cf. GA 17, 112/81: 'What has become familiar under the rubric "philosophy of life" is a *tendency* toward living existence [*auf lebendiges Dasein*].'

exclusively to the being of the human as a being-in-the-world, while life is reserved for the being of plants and animals as a lack or, more precisely, an 'impoverishment' of world. Thus whereas previously it was a matter of measuring the distance between the *it lives/worlds* proper and its thingly self-projections, it is now a problem of measuring the gap between *worldly human existence* and *un-worldly animal life* – that is to say, of 'finding out what constitutes the *essence of the animality* of the animal and the *essence of the humanity* of man', and the former in terms of an ontological determination of 'the *living character of a living being*' as such<sup>10</sup> – a gap that can no longer be understood merely in terms of varying degrees of richness and complexity along or within a single life-trajectory.

Heidegger is suddenly strangely insistent on this *essential* bifurcation, as though he were anxious to prevent us from slipping quietly back into the more 'ordinary', 'linear' conceptuality and terminology of *Being and Time* and the early lecture courses. Indeed, no fewer than seven times in the first thirty pages of the biology material he pauses to remind us, often emphatically, that 'life' and 'living-being' refer always and exclusively to the plant-being of the plant and the

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<sup>10</sup> GA 29/30, 265/179. 'Animality' taken generally so as to include plant-life, the plant itself being something like the outer limit of life, something that stands at the very threshold of life and non-life.

animal-being of the animal, never to the human and its humanity.<sup>11</sup> And yet the inner rationale of this bifurcation is by no means self-evident. Why has it become necessary all of a sudden to strip the animal of its world? How do we arrive so quickly at a radical discontinuity of living and worlding from out of the former and equally radical continuity of the primal *it lives/worlds*? As one commentator puts it: 'This is more than a dilemma; it is an outright enigma.'<sup>12</sup> Let us try to demystify this 'enigma' a bit, to fill in the missing steps of the argument and assess its consequences.

Following the turn to fundamental ontology and the concomitant need to secure a point of access to being (i.e., the human 'being-there' as the properly onto-ontological being), the sole criterion of assessment in WS 1929-30 is proximity to being; entities are defined and allocated according to their having or not having of beings as such, beings qua beings. Hence the categorical distinction between the existing human's being-in-the-world and the living animal's world-poverty is at bottom one between the presence or absence of 'being-understanding', *Seinsverständnis*: the human is 'world-forming' (*weltbildend*) insofar as it is a 'being open for beings as they are', an 'irrupting into what is actual

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<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, 265/179, 266/179, 277/188, 282/191, 284/193, 292/198, 303/207.

<sup>12</sup> Brett Buchanan, *Onto-Ethologies: The Animal Environments of Uexküll, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 93.

as such, so as to experience itself as having irrupted as an actual being in the midst of what can now be manifest as beings',<sup>13</sup> while the animal is 'world-poor' (*weltarm*) insofar as it is 'in such a way that beings can never, and essentially never, manifest themselves as beings'.<sup>14</sup> Thus it is being itself that constitutes the notorious 'Abgrund', the 'abyss', yawning between human and animal:

For it is *not* simply a question of a *qualitative otherness* of the animal world as compared with the human world, and especially not a question of quantitative distinctions in range, depth, and breadth – not a question of whether or how the animal takes what is given to it in a different way, but rather of whether or how the animal can apprehend something *as* something, something *as* a being, at all. If it cannot, then the animal is separated from man by an abyss.<sup>15</sup>

But precisely here we must ask: why does this simple fact – viz.,

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<sup>13</sup> GA 29/30, 496/342, 530f./365.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 368/253. Cf. 361/248: '*The animal as such does not stand within a manifestness of beings. Neither its so-called environment nor the animal itself are manifest as beings...neither the one nor the other is experienced as being.*'

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 383f./264.

that the animal is not the all-important access-portal to being, that the animal cannot 'apprehend something *as* something, something *as* a being, at all' – suddenly warrant the drastic conclusion that 'the animal is separated from man by an abyss'? Put another way, why is it that reformulating the human-animal distinction in terms of the apprehending or not-apprehending of being serves automatically to destroy the former unity and universality of life, especially given the fact that Heidegger had already interpreted *this very same distinction*, as we just saw from the comment from SS 1927 cited above, as one occurring *within life itself*, that is, between 'mere' life and 'existential' life, 'living as existent'? Why is being-apprehension not taken simply as the mark of existentialized or fully developed life?

Here Heidegger has hit upon something fundamental. For it was indeed previously a matter of drawing such distinctions in range, depth, breadth, intensity, complexity, sophistication, etc. (which is precisely what made the analogical reduction possible). In other words, that an orectic life could result from the diminishment of an expansive, self-appropriating, 'apophantic' (in the broadest sense of a letting-be-seen) life is perhaps possible in principle. But that an orectic life could result from the diminishment of a *hermeneutic* life, an interpretive life grounded in an understanding of being, is absolutely *impossible*, for there is no organ, faculty or structure powerful enough to *generate* being-understanding out of desire. That is to say, being-understanding

does not magically materialize from out of an enhancement or intensification of the understanding of the desirable, pleasurable, pursuable, etc., just as a being is not something exceptionally desirable; an increase in the desirability of the desirable by no means yields a being. There is no inner connection whatsoever between desire-manifestation and being-manifestation; they run in parallel. If being-manifestation does occur, this fact is entirely independent of desire-manifestation, never a mere function or transformation of it. Hence there is no passing from 'mere life' to 'living as existent' if this means passing from an absolute lack to an absolute possession of understanding of being. These two states cannot belong to the same continuum; the human's existence cannot be a higher form of the animal's life.

It must be admitted that the presence or absence of being-understanding suffices as a principle for distinguishing between essentially different modes of being. However, this fact amounts only to a deferring of the real issue, not its solution. For insofar as the having and not having of being-understanding is cast in terms of a having and not having of *world*, this means that the world is now taken to be coextensive with the dimension of beings qua beings.<sup>16</sup> But what justifies

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 530/365: World 'prevails' in 'projection' as '*the letting-prevail of the being of beings in the whole of their possible binding character*'. Cf.

this reduction of the world to a being-world? For although it was never supposed that the animal's world was given as a field of beings, still the animal's primordial enworldedness was never in question. In other words, granted that desire-manifestation is completely and essentially distinct from being-manifestation, why are these two forms of manifestation not taken to represent *two essentially distinct modalities of one and the same being-in-the-world*, i.e., two independent yet equiprimordial ways – let us say, 'vital' and 'existential' – of opening up onto or of having the world?

Now *perhaps* something like this is indeed how matters now stand with the animal and its life, in which case, at the end of the day, nothing much has changed except the meaning of the words: the animal retains its forms of disclosure, its own kind of in-being, being-with, understanding, signification, even 'truth' ('in a certain sense'); however, these are no longer to be designated with the words *world*, *Dasein*, *existence* and so on – new words are necessary. For example:

The *specific manner* in which man *is* we shall call *comportment* and the *specific manner* in which the animal *is* we shall call *behaviour*. They are fundamentally different from one another. In principle it is also possible to reverse this linguistic usage and refer to *animal*

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292/198: '...we understand *world* as the *accessibility of beings*...'



*comportment*.<sup>17</sup>

Animal 'behaviour' is a 'being-driven toward a performance of a particular kind in each case'; it 'is not a *doing and acting*, as in human comportment, but a *driven performing* [*Treiben*]'. Likewise, the animal never has a 'world', strictly speaking, but always only an 'environment' – the animal '*behaves within an environment but never within a world*'.<sup>18</sup> This environment, in turn, is likened to a 'ring of disinhibition' within which the animal is held captive to the entities that manage to penetrate it and disengage its drives, or 'stimulate' it toward some behaviour or other: 'Instinctual drivenness as being driven from one drive to another holds and drives the animal within a *ring* which it cannot escape...The animal is *encircled* [*umringt*] by this ring [*Ring*] constituted by the reciprocal drivenness of its drives.'<sup>19</sup> In this way the language of theoretical biology comes to replace that of phenomenological philosophy with respect to the being of animals. The animal's 'being-in-the-world' is better characterized as a 'being-driven-around-within-the-

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 345f./237.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 347f./239.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 362f./249. Cf. 292/198: 'Throughout the course of its life the animal is...immured as it were within a fixed sphere that is incapable of further expansion or contraction.'

environment', and therefore nothing regarding the animal's openness, relatedness, etc. is fundamentally disputed. Indeed this is precisely why the animal's not-having of world is not a total *non*-having, i.e., why the animal is not a thing on hand like a stone.

All the same, I do not think this is the best way of interpreting the notion of world-poverty as a lack of being-understanding. The animal's de-worlding is in fact much more extreme, and to that extent problematic. For one thing, it is easy to see that the linguistic or lexical shift also entails a conceptual shift: the animal's 'behaviour', its being driven to and fro within its 'environment-ring', is a far cry from its finding itself in the midst of a world that is disclosed to it and that matters to it as ἡδύ and λυπηρόν; indeed the animal no longer finds itself at all.<sup>20</sup> To be sure, orectic being-in-the-world is 'blind' in the sense of wild, impulsive, appetitive, unchained from the horizon of free choice and rational action<sup>21</sup> – nonetheless, there is a certain insouciance, a kind of ludic spontaneity to pursuit. 'Life', on the other hand, understood as the antithesis of 'existence', is something else entirely: a congenital dullness and dimness, a thick, dense, almost mechanical stupidity. Lacking understanding of being, the animal is trapped in a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 373/257: '[The] animal is absorbed without its ever being with itself [*bei sich selbst*] in the proper sense.'

<sup>21</sup> GA 22, 311/229. Cf. GA 29/30, 368/253 on the 'blindness' of behaviour.

state of permanent *Benommenheit*, a vacant, gaping 'benumbment' (one has only to recall the zombie honeybee that continues to gorge itself even after its abdomen has been cut away<sup>22</sup>).

But the reason for this is something deeper than a simple change of terms. If instinctual-behavioural drivenness within an environment-ring is thought to constitute a mode of in-being or openness all its own, ontologically akin to but essentially distinct from orectic in-being, then this seems to reactivate the very sort of modern metaphysical dilemma that the concept of being-in-the-world was designed to destruct. For what is the relation between the human being's 'world' and the animal's 'environment'? More precisely, if 'world' (in the narrower sense of the dimension of being) and 'environment' (as the ring of instinctual behaviour) are taken as two distinct permutations of *world* (in the strong sense of the realm of in-being, disclosure), then this *world* seems to function as some *third thing*, some anterior 'reality', akin to Husserl's *das Identische*, that is 'apprehended' from different 'points of view'. And indeed it often appears as if Heidegger himself cannot avoid utilizing just this sort of dualistic language:

The animal certainly has access to..., and indeed to something that actually is. But this is something that *only we* are capable of

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<sup>22</sup> GA 29/30, 352ff./242f.

experiencing and having manifest *as beings*.<sup>23</sup>

Human and animal have 'something' in common, but each 'experiences' this something and 'has it manifest' in its own way – the human in a 'be-ing' sort of way, the animal in a 'disinhibiting', behavioural-instinctual way. It is thus a problem of making sense of the difference between the human and animal 'perspectives', 'modes of apprehension' and so forth. But as Heidegger says quite clearly in his SS 1924 Aristotle lectures, being-in-the-world is precisely what can never be understood in terms of 'modes of apprehension':

[One] may not approach the entire analysis of the encounter-characters of the world as though there were a world in itself, and animals and human beings would have a definite portion of that

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 390f./269. Cf. 368/253: '[If] behaviour is not a relation to beings, does this mean that it is a relation to nothing? Not at all. Yet if it is not a relation to nothing, it must always be a relation to something, which surely must itself *be* and actually *is*...There is no indication that the animal somehow does or ever could comport itself toward beings as such. Yet it is certainly true that the animal does announce itself as something that relates to other things, and does so in such a way that it is *somehow affected* by these other things.'

world, which they always see from their own definite point of view. It is also incorrect to speak of a 'world of animals' and a 'world of human beings'. The issue is not *modes of apprehending actuality* according to definite points of view; rather the issue is *being-in-the-world*. Thus, since the world is encountered through a definite disposition of living things, animals and human beings are in their world. The relatedness of animals to the world is precisely that which brings animals in their being genuinely [*eigentlich*] into being-there. Insofar as one takes apprehending, grasping the world as a general topic of investigation, one must be clear about the fact that grasping and apprehending the world *presuppose* a being-in-the-world.<sup>24</sup>

Herein lies the real dilemma. Existence, being-in-the-world, is a unitary phenomenon, not one 'mode' of 'experiencing' 'actuality' or 'reality'. But with the division of essence brought about through the introduction of the basic criterion of being-understanding, existence does indeed appear to be reduced to just such a 'mode', i.e., alongside the animal's 'behaving-in-the-environment' (which would be its formal equivalent). In other words, *two essentially different modalities of in-being must now somehow find accommodation within a single, unified horizon of in-being* – something which is obviously impossible. For this reason being-in-the-

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<sup>24</sup> GA 18, 56f./40.

world must devolve *either* on being-understanding *or* absence of being-understanding, but it can never devolve on both simultaneously.

In this way something that was once held to constitute the prerogative of one special subset of being-in-the-world – viz., being-understanding as the exclusive possession of existential life – is now taken to be the condition of possibility of being-in-the-world *as such*. And consequently non-existential or ‘mere’ life is divested, *alienated*, of *all of its former worldly possessions* – in-being, disclosure, understanding, being-with and all the rest; henceforth these can have only one proprietor, existence, as true being-in-the-world. Life is reduced to penury, to being-in-the-world in a state of absolute destitution, impoverishment. *The most precise sense-content of world-poverty is simply this: being-in-the-world denatured and denuded, totally deprived of the world itself.* The phrase ‘world-poverty’ is not some sort of concession to the inherently opaque and impenetrable nature of life, as though life, being inaccessible *a priori* (because wholly other), could only ever be defined vis-à-vis existence. Rather such impoverishment, divestment, etc. is the most precise description of the very *positivity* of life, of its essence;<sup>25</sup> life just *is* being-in-the-world itself in its condition of absolute and permanent alienation.

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<sup>25</sup> GA 29/30, §45a, 275/186.

### III. Consequences of the alienation of life

There are three main consequences of this divestment or alienation of life. For one thing, life becomes something paradoxical and hence unintelligible. As Heidegger himself expresses it: 'The animal thus reveals itself as a being which *both has and does not have world*. This is contradictory and thus logically impossible.'<sup>26</sup> This unintelligibility or impossibility takes a number of distinct but related forms. There is, for instance, the vexing issue of 'openness'. There is no point racking our brains over the intractable conundrum of whether and how the animal is 'open for...', since the answer is already contained in the structural make-up of life itself qua world-poverty: viz., the animal is at once open and not open. Or to be more precise: on the one hand, insofar as the animal is poor in world, it cannot be open in any genuine sense; on the other hand, insofar as the animal is clearly not a thing on hand like a stone, the animal cannot be absolutely *non-open*, either. Thus it follows that the animal is simultaneously not-open and not-non-open. If we turn to the text, we find any number of references to the animal's 'openness'. For example, whereas the stone-thing 'is essentially *without access* to those beings amongst which it is in its own way (presence at hand)', the animal 'is *not without access* to what is around it and about

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 293/199.

it',<sup>27</sup> that is to say, 'something resembling a *surrounding environment* is open for the animal and its behaviour'.<sup>28</sup> Or again, the animal is 'related to' and 'somehow affected by' things that are '*open in a certain way*' for it, viz., in the form of stimuli.<sup>29</sup> (Heidegger even goes so far as to suggest that this 'openness' may be so rich and abundant that 'the human world may have nothing to compare' it with.<sup>30</sup>) But in actuality this 'openness' is only the openness of *the closure of captivation*, i.e., of 'taken behaviour', of an absorptive confinement within the ring of disinhibition, the environment:

[The] inner possibility of poverty in world...is the instinctual being-open of taken behaviour. The animal possesses this being-open in its essence. Being open in captivation is the *essential possession* of the animal. On the basis of this possession it can be deprived, it can be poor, it can be determined in its being by poverty. This having is... being held captive to the disinhibiting ring – it is a *having of that which disinhibits*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 290ff./197f.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 369/253.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 367f./253. Cf. 361f./248.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 371f./255.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 391/269f.



The 'openness' of life is merely *the not-having of the very openness proper that was just stripped from it* (the 'being-open for that which disinhibits... is a not-having, and indeed a not-having of world'<sup>32</sup>). The animal's openness just *is* its deprivation of being and nothing besides. The word '*Benommenheit*' names precisely this: the 'openness' of enclosure, encirclement, captivity, driven behaviour, etc.

But the real question here is whether there is any meaningful distinction to be drawn between a complete *a priori* lack of world, such as characterizes the living animal, and an absolute *a priori* lack of world, such as characterizes the non-living stone, i.e., whether there can be any openness at all between the 'not' and the 'non'. The stone is constitutionally and absolutely worldless 'in the sense that the stone *cannot even be deprived* of something like world'.<sup>33</sup> Do things stand any differently with the animal? 'As far as the animal is concerned we cannot say that beings are closed off from it. Beings could only be closed off if there were some possibility of disclosure at all, however slight that might be. But the captivity of the animal places the animal *essentially outside of the possibility that beings could be either disclosed to it or closed off from it.*'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 59.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 289/196.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 361/248 (my emphasis).

Inevitably, neither animal nor stone has even the slightest possibility of either closure or disclosure, of having or not having, which is precisely why Heidegger, in his lectures on Hölderlin a few years later (WS 1934-5), can remark that '[the] leap from living animals to humans that speak is as large if not larger than that from the lifeless stone to living being.'<sup>35</sup> *Life is ontologically closer to lifelessness, to absolute non-life, than to worldly existence, and indeed life is, in terms of its form, virtually indistinguishable from lifelessness. We might simply say the animal is a stone with instincts.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See GA 39, 75 (cited in Michel Haar, Reginald Lilly [tr.], *The Song of the Earth* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993], 29). Heidegger argues the same point in *Contributions*, written around the same time; see GA 65, 277/195: 'The darkening and *worldlessness*: (Earlier as *world-poverty* [*Weltarmut*]! Misunderstandable. The rock is not even worldless, because it is indeed without darkening.)' The 1949 'Introduction to "What Is Metaphysics?"' is perhaps the bluntest of all: 'The being that exists is the human being. The human being alone exists. Rocks are, but they do not exist. Trees are, but they do not exist. Horses are, but they do not exist. Angels are, but they do not exist. God is, but he does not exist' (GA 9, 204/284). There is a radical equivalence of all things, from rocks to God, that do not have being qua being.

<sup>36</sup> It is precisely because there is no essential distinction between the not-

The contradictoriness or impossibility of life also extends to the problem of 'access', for if the animal, like the stone, lacks all possibility of disclosure, it follows that any access or 'transposability' vis-à-vis life, i.e., any 'going along with' the animal in its animality, is also essentially impossible. Or again, and more precisely: insofar as the animal is

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openness of life and the non-openness of things that the problem of the 'as' is so confounding. Thus McNeill writes: 'The animal is still able to move and "act" in a manner that is not *wholly* or exclusively determined by its immediate environment. Although Heidegger, so far as we are aware, nowhere clarifies this sufficiently, the animal (or at least some animals) in fact has and must have a certain ability...to relate to something *as* something, although not, indeed, *as being* something...A cat responds to the presence of a mouse *as* its potential dinner, or *as* something to play with; it responds to the presence of a dog *as* a potential threat – *and not* as its food...' (See William McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Êthos* [Albany: SUNY Press, 2006], 45.) But of course, and necessarily, the oretic *as* has all but vanished from Heidegger's text along with every other structure that used to belong to the animal's being-in-the-world. It survives only here and there, and no doubt accidentally, for example, at GA 29/30, 364/250: 'The one animal is never there for the other simply as a living creature, but is only there for it either as sexual partner or as prey...'

simultaneously not-open and not-non-open, transposability is also simultaneously impossible and not impossible.<sup>37</sup> Just as before the distinction is hardly a meaningful one insofar as access is never, strictly speaking, actually possible in a full and positive sense (insofar as the animal's life is virtually identical to the stone's lifelessness, the possibility of any going along with the animal is equal to that of any going along with the stone – i.e., zero). In this way the 'analogical' or 'reductive' strategy is disqualified *a priori*.<sup>38</sup>

The second consequence of the alienation of life is that the science of biology, once held to be incapable of self-actualization outside of

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<sup>37</sup> GA 29/30, 308f./210f.: 'From the side of the animal, what is it that grants the possibility of transposedness and necessarily refuses any going along with?...The animal displays a sphere of transposability...which nonetheless refuses any going along with. The animal has a sphere of potential transposability and yet it does not necessarily have what we call world. In contrast with the stone, the animal in any case does possess the possibility of transposability, but it does not allow the possibility of self-transposition in the sense in which this transpires between one human being and another.'

<sup>38</sup> It is replaced by a 'deconstructive' (*abbauenden*) one: 'the essence of life can become accessible only if we consider it in a deconstructive fashion' (ibid., 371f./255).

philosophy, is now released from philosophy's custody, with the result that life, thus immune from any potential phenomenological scrutiny, is once again, and ironically, reduced to *an object of a detached theoretical gaze* – the very state of affairs in response to which the concept of life qua being-in-the-world was initially put forward. Thus life becomes the prerogative of biology as objective science, while philosophy, insofar as it takes life as its theme, must henceforth submit to biology (thus it is the biological or zoological concepts of instincts, drives, behaviour, stimulation, environment and the like that inform and guide the philosophical enquiry, not the reverse – that is, the philosophical concept of 'world-poverty' does not inform the discourse of biology). In this way the philosophical elucidation of life comes more and more to resemble the most humdrum and traditional scientific theories of life: the animal's dazed 'struggling with the encircling ring which circumscribes the totality of its instinctual activity...is nothing other than what we are already acquainted with from our common experience of living beings: self-preservation and maintenance of the species' (although this is now purportedly grasped in a more ontologically adequate way as 'belonging to the essence of captivation, to animality as such').<sup>39</sup>

The third and final, and perhaps most disastrous, consequence is that the human's bond with the rest of the life-community is irreparably

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 377/259.

broken. For the young Heidegger, who understood life as such as universal being-in-the-world, there was no great difficulty in affirming the obvious – namely, that human and animal have something essential in common, that they share a common mode of being. But once the animal is cut off from the world on the grounds of its lack of being-understanding, once it becomes clear that being-in-the-world is the exclusive possession of the human, it follows equally and conversely that the human can never share in the animal's mode of being, can never 'be animal' or live in an animal sort of way, except by means of a total self-evacuation, a thorough self-negation of its own human mode of being.<sup>40</sup> Whereas previously Heidegger could insist that the human, 'living as existent', could be deprived of its existence and for that reason and to that extent could be considered 'merely' from the point of view of its life – i.e., could be '[moved] into that domain of being which we know as the world of animals and plants' – now the human-animal kinship, while undeniable, is reduced to a kind of thorny puzzle, a 'riddle', something that one might pause and mull over from time to time but that nevertheless is essentially beyond the reach of philosophical comprehension.<sup>41</sup> Inasmuch as life has been reduced to

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<sup>40</sup> GA 34, 236/169: 'Man can never be an animal, i.e., can never be nature.'

<sup>41</sup> See, in this context, the 'Letter on Humanism', GA 9, 326/248.

animality and animality to the benumbing of world-poverty, the human simply cannot and can never live.

#### IV. Conclusion

The trouble with the biology sections of the WS 1929-30 lectures lies not so much with the nature of the enquiry as such as with the constraints imposed upon it by the metaphysical framework within which it is carried out. (In the end these constraints will prove too burdensome, prompting Heidegger to suggest that the whole theory might have to be 'repudiated altogether' – the famous self-criticism of §63.<sup>42</sup>) Heidegger's question is *not*: what is the being of life itself; what is life qua life? Rather Heidegger asks something such as the following: what kind of openness is possible between a not-having and a non-having of *the* world as *the* field of manifestation, or better, how does one understand the 'openness' of non-thingliness given that the animal cannot be *open* in the true and full sense of being-in-the-world? A much better question, however, would be one such as this: given a certain 'openness' or 'world' in general, a pure field of manifestation *in* which all living

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<sup>42</sup> But at the same time he insists that 'we have...*no right to alter our thesis that the animal is poor in world*' – no doubt because this is the only logically possible scenario on his metaphysical model.

beings *are qua living*, what form does this in-ness take in the absence of something like being-understanding – or, how are things given, how do they manifest themselves, to a non-‘existential’ life? This question need not be taken as asking about the different modes of apprehension of actuality. It is by no means clear that what Heidegger here insists on describing (and for essential reasons) in terms of drives, instincts, stimulation and so on cannot be reconciled, that is, in a more phenomenologically adequate way, with the world as a unitary zone of disclosure, namely, as equiprimordial structural features of being-in-the-world itself (much as Bergson does with his concept of intuition, or Husserl with his theory of *Instinktintentionalität*, as we shall see below in Chapter 5). And in this case it would be possible to pose the further problem of how these existential- and ‘instinct’-structures are *co-present* and co-actualized in and for one and the same entity, viz., us ourselves as living-(as-)existents.

For whatever reason, Heidegger does not allow for the possibility of such a non-existential or non-being-apprehending, an orectic or ‘instinctual’, dimension of being-in-the-world itself – does not allow, in other words, that there might be, *within* and *constitutive of* the total field of manifestation itself, certain forms of disclosure and thus of in-ness that do not require or implicate the having of things as beings. *Or at least not in these precise terms*. For as it happens, there is in fact some such idea as this at work, albeit obliquely and confusedly, in the dark and



difficult image of the *earth* that begins to emerge in the mid-1930s in the lectures on Hölderlin and that reaches its peak with the 1935-6 essay, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. Accordingly it is to this latter text that we must now turn our attention.

## Chapter 3

### Earth, Life and Labour in

### 'The Origin of the Work of Art'

#### I. The dogma of world-poverty and the displacement of the problem of life onto the earth

The WS 1929-30 lectures leave life in a most distressing state; moreover, we ourselves are compelled to adopt the most awkward and counterintuitive stance vis-à-vis life. For Heidegger, having now fixed his grounding question in place and thus having settled into the proper horizon of his philosophy, life appears, first of all, as a queer sort of 'openness' or non-thingliness that is fundamentally impoverished inasmuch as it lacks the condition of possibility of *the* open, of genuine openness (viz., understanding of being), and second, and for that reason, as a mode of being from which human beings are originarily, hence entirely and permanently, excluded. Moreover, insofar as Heidegger remains steadfastly committed to this radically 'worldist' or (in the strictest sense of the term) 'existentialist' perspective until the very end – that is to say, because he never ceases to link the open, the site or field of manifestation, to proximity to being, never doubts or

challenges his absolute reduction of the 'there' to the world (being-*there* to being-in-the-*world-of-beings*) – it naturally happens that this paradoxical view of life eventually petrifies into a kind of established dogma. More precisely, even while Heidegger acknowledges the profound inadequacy of his analysis of life (and to such a degree as perhaps to require its total 'repudiation'), insofar as the internal constraints of his own discourse make it virtually impossible to draw any other conclusions about life, the 'world-poverty' hypothesis comes to function almost as a regulative idea in the Kantian sense, that is to say, as something that exceeds all rational comprehension but nevertheless retains a certain practical or empirical cash value, e.g., for theoretical biology and zoology.

Thus it happens that, in the later work, whenever life or the animal crops up, we always find the same catechismal double reaffirmation of, on the one hand, the living being's utter darkness, dullness, blindness, benumbment, instinctual drivenness, etc., and on the other hand, the impossibility of ever comprehending this darkness and dullness insofar as the animal is not an object, a thing on hand – in which case the enquiry has reached a dead end (a *Holzweg*), has not yet properly begun, must be postponed to a later date, etc. For example, from the essay 'Aletheia' from 1943:

The rising of animals into the open remains closed and sealed in itself

in a strangely captivating way. Self-revealing and self-concealing in the animal are one in such a way that human speculation practically runs out of alternatives when it rejects mechanistic views of animality...as firmly as it avoids anthropomorphic interpretations. Because the animal does not speak, self-revealing and self-concealing...possess a wholly different life-essence [*Lebe-Wesen*] with the animals.<sup>1</sup>

The animal's dumbness, its alogia, indicates that it is open only in a 'closed', 'sealed in' and 'captivating' way (the animal experiences neither closure nor disclosure); hence the animal 'possesses a wholly different life-essence' from the human. The mind simply cannot wrap itself around such a 'strange' mode of being; thus when speculation rejects mechanism and anthropomorphism it 'practically runs out of alternatives' for understanding the animal and its mode of being, its life (= animality).

Or again, from the Parmenides lectures of 1942:

In his comportment to beings, man in advance sees the open by dwelling within the opening and opened project of being. Without the open, which is how being itself comes to presence, beings could

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<sup>1</sup> GA 7, 281f./EGT, 116f.

be neither unconcealed nor concealed. Man and he alone sees into the open...The animal, on the contrary, does not glimpse or see into, and certainly does not behold, the open in the sense of the unconcealedness of the unconcealed. Therefore neither can an animal relate to the closed as such, no more than it can comport itself to the concealed. The animal is excluded from the essential domain of the strife between unconcealedness and concealedness. The sign of this essential exclusion is that no animal or plant 'has the word'.

This reference to the exclusion of the animal from the essential domain of unconcealedness introduces us to the enigmatic character of all living beings. For the animal is related to his circle of food, prey, and sex in a way essentially different from the way the stone is related to the earth upon which it lies. In those things characterized as plant or animal we find the peculiar arousal of excitability, by which the living being is 'excited', i.e., stirred to an emerging into a circle of stimulatability...No excitability or stimulatability of plants and animals ever brings them into the free in such a way that what is excited could ever let the exciting 'be' what it is even merely as exciting...Plant and animal are suspended in something outside of themselves without ever being able to 'see' either the outside or the inside, i.e., to have it stand as an aspect unconcealed in the free of being. And never would it be possible for a stone, no more than for an airplane, to elevate itself toward the sun in jubilation and to move

like a lark, which nevertheless does not see into the open. What the lark 'sees', and how it sees, and what it is we here call 'seeing' on the basis of our observation that the lark has eyes, these questions remain to be asked.<sup>2</sup>

As before, the animal is excluded from the open, the free, insofar as it does not have things as beings, does not have being as such. The animal is held captive within its 'disinhibiting ring', its circle of stimulation and excitation. It is 'suspended' in an outside that it can nonetheless never access; thus it 'sees' but does not *see*, 'has' things without really having them, 'behaves' but never acts freely, relates to things without comporting itself toward them, etc. And yet, for all that, the lark is not a stone-thing. For this reason life is 'enigmatic'. Let us not overlook the subtle change in diagnosis. Life is no longer merely a 'great difficulty' as it was, for example, in SS 1927, a problem that might eventually be worked out analogically or reductively by a phenomenological biology; life has now become a 'riddle' and a 'mystery',<sup>3</sup> something inherently aporetic and therefore impenetrable.

In addition to these isolated remarks on the animal's being, there

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<sup>2</sup> GA 54, 237f./159f.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 239/160: '[The] riddle of life will never be found where the mystery of the living being has already been abandoned.'

are also the frequent and consistent denunciations of life as an historical phenomenon – more specifically, of the obsession of the modern age with every manner and variety of ‘lived experience’ on the one hand, and of the insidious complicity of life, in the form of a nefarious (and racist) biologism, in the ordering of all beings into disposable inventory for the instantaneous manipulation of the pure will to will under the dominion of modern technology on the other.<sup>4</sup>

Given this state of affairs, it would be entirely reasonable to conclude that Heidegger has little else to contribute to a philosophical theory of life, that life simply marks an internal limit of his thinking, and to a certain extent this is undoubtedly true. As it happens, however, this does not exhaust Heidegger’s treatment of the problem of life. In a number of texts from his middle period, and above all in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ of 1935-6, we can discern the faint contours of a novel and potentially extremely fruitful notion of life that, for certain fundamental reasons, as we shall see in the following chapter, does not manage to survive the turn to the history of Being, with which the later

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., GA 45, 141/122f.: ‘The more frantic the contrivances and calculations of reason, the stronger and the more widespread is the cry for lived experience. Both are excessive and are mutually exchangeable. What is more, the contrivances, e.g., the gigantic accomplishments of technology, become themselves the greatest “lived experience”.’

work is almost exclusively preoccupied. At first glance this seems a rather dubious thing to say, since nowhere is the concept of life, to say nothing of a novel theory of life as such, evident in the artwork essay. But upon closer inspection we see that this is only because of the fact that this interpretation of life is presented not through an extended meditation on 'life' but rather by way of a *displacement* of the concept of life onto another and closely related notion – viz., the earth. It is, in short, the imagery and vocabulary of the earth that allows Heidegger to reintroduce the problem of life without having to invoke 'life' as such as, at least for him, an intellectually bankrupt notion. To be sure, this is not to suggest that 'earth' is simply a code word for 'life', as though the latter could always be glimpsed beneath, and therefore freely substituted for, the former. Nor is it to suggest that this displacement was carried out consciously, in a deliberate effort to circumvent the difficulties attending 'life'; on the contrary, Heidegger himself seems entirely oblivious to it, and indeed would no doubt denounce the very suggestion of it given his deep-seated hostility to 'life'. It is rather and simply to say that life is always inextricably tied to the earth, such that any discussion of earth necessarily implicates a certain *pre-understanding* of the *being* of life, and that this pre-understanding shines through with special brilliance in the artwork essay in particular. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to show precisely in what this proto-theory of life actually consists, as far as this is possible, and here we shall limit our



analysis to the version of the essay published in the *Holzwege* collection.

## II. Living 'on and in the earth'

We must begin by noting that there are in fact two principal and markedly different images of earth in play in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', only one of which is suggestive of something like life. It is true that Heidegger himself does not draw any such distinction; thus it happens that at certain places in the text one or the other image predominates, while at other places both images overlap to form a single compound image. But that the distinction is valid is evident not only from a positive analysis of the images themselves but also from a negative consideration of the consequences of failing to take the difference between them into account. In other words, treating the earth as a monosemous concept severely impedes comprehension of the essay as a whole by giving the impression that it is rife with internal contradictions. To give just one example: while Heidegger is adamant that it is the work of art that first draws the earth out into the open and frees it as an earth, he also states in no uncertain terms that it is *equipment* that first liberates the earth.<sup>5</sup> Now the latter assertion is in

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<sup>5</sup> GA 5, 20/15: '[It] is the reliability of the equipment which first...assures the earth the freedom of its steady pressure.'

flagrant opposition to the former inasmuch as it is in the nature of equipment to absorb the earth entirely into its functionality and thus to *conceal* it (the wood disappears into the table, the metal into the machine, the glass into the window); equipment is precisely that from which the work must be distinguished qua work. But the difficulty is immediately resolved once we realize that in each case it is a *completely different earth* – and not merely a different inflection of one and the same earth – that is liberated.

That the earth is a polysemous notion should come as no surprise as long as we recall that what is primarily at issue in this essay is not at all the earth as such but rather the meaning and role of the artwork in the context of a certain interpretation of truth and its relation to being. The earth is mobilized mainly to provide the work with the material anchor it needs in order to function as a bearer of truth understood as unconcealment; hence it might be expected that Heidegger is somewhat lax in his use of this concept. Moreover, it is obvious that the notion of 'earth', taken in itself, is far too rich and complex to be restricted to the particular job to which it is here assigned; it conceals a vast surplus of meaning that can never be entirely suspended or suppressed and that therefore always gets expressed in some way and to some degree whenever and for whatever reason the notion of 'earth' is invoked. Of these two images of earth, then, we may say that the former is restrictive and abstract, a *concept* geared toward the solution of a

definite philosophical problem, while the latter is expansive and concrete, an *intuition* more in keeping with the way in which the earth is given in the natural attitude. It is mainly the intuition that we are interested in here, as the image more closely associated with and relevant for life; but precisely for this reason we must take care to explicate the concept as that from which the intuition must always be set apart. Let us now attempt to disentangle these two images and to consider each in isolation.

#### A. The earth as concept: the boundary-setting law

It is well known that the earth is somehow associated with the process of materialization by means of which beings arise into unconcealment; this is the most conspicuous sense of earth at work in the essay. But in a way it is also the most elusive. What is clear is that the manifesting of beings, their unfolding emergence into a world – which Heidegger has recently, and most notably in SS 1935, begun referring to with the term φύσις – is always mediated or ‘measured’ by the concrete material density into which they are set back and held fast, a process that Heidegger characterises as a ‘protecting’ or ‘sheltering’ (*bergen*):

Earth is that in which the arising of everything that arises is brought back – as, indeed, the very thing that it is – and sheltered [*zurück-*

*birgt*]. In the things that arise the earth presences as the protecting one [*das Bergende*].<sup>6</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this ‘that’ into which ‘everything that arises is brought back’ as matter or substance – as the wood, stone, colour, sound, etc. as such. But just as little is the earth anything like pure form. Rather, and in a way that amounts to both a reinscription and a surpassing of the Aristotelian distinction between ὕλη and μορφή,<sup>7</sup> the earth is precisely *that which* draws beings up into the material and places them (*stellen*) or fixes them in place (*Feststellen*) in their forms. The earth, in this first sense, is nothing more or less than the *universal stream of boundary-setting* that secures and sustains φύσις as the reciprocal and harmonious co-arising of all things into the open:

All the things of the earth, the earth itself in its entirety, flow together [*verströmen sich*] in reciprocal harmony. But this flowing together [*Verströmen*] is not a blurring [*Verwischen*]. What flows here is the self-sustaining stream of boundary-setting [*der in sich beruhete Strom*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28/21. Cf. 35/26: ‘The earth is the unforced coming forth of the continually self-closing, and in that way, self-sheltering [*Bergenden*].’

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 136ff.

*des Ausgrenzens*], which bounds [*begrenzt*] everything that presences into its presence.<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere Heidegger speaks of the earth as a kind of ‘law’, *Gesetz*: earth ‘shows itself as that which...is secure in its law and which constantly closes itself up’; and again: ‘Earth, bearing and rising up, strives to preserve its closedness and to entrust everything to its law’.<sup>9</sup>

Immediately we should note the connection between (self-)closedness, (*Sich*)*verschließens*, boundary-setting, *Ausgrenzens*, and presencing, *Wesen*. For Heidegger, as for the Greeks, beings are in no way inhibited or constrained by their boundaries but rather *released* and *liberated* by them; a being can only ever *be*, arrive into the fullness of its essence, its presencing, through a process of delineation or circumscription that ‘does not seal off and shut up [*riegelt nicht ab*]’ but rather ‘first brings what is present to radiance’, ‘sets free into unconcealment [*Unverborgene*]’.<sup>10</sup> As Heidegger says elsewhere: ‘A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized...that from which something *begins its presencing* [*Wesen*].’<sup>11</sup> All beings – beings as such,

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<sup>8</sup> GA 5, 33/25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 50f./38.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 71/53.

<sup>11</sup> GA 7, 156/PLT, 154.

whether physical objects, images or words – come to presence, to manifestation, only by arriving and settling into an ‘outline’, *Umriß*, a perceptible contour within which they contain and maintain as well as save and preserve themselves. What Heidegger calls the *Riß* – the rift, break or design – signifies the precise *moment* when this self-emergence of beings is halted and consummated by their ‘rising up’ into their outlines; it is ‘the outline sketch [*Auf-riß*] that marks out the fundamental features of the rising up of the clearing of beings’, that which ‘brings the contest between measure and limit into a shared outline [*Umriß*]’.<sup>12</sup> *Der Riß* is not *der Umriß*, the contour itself, but rather the sudden and decisive *interruption* of the expanding movement of revealing by the intervening counter-thrust of the material, literally the *tear* through which the being irrupts into the openness of world. Likewise, *der Umriß* is not *die Grenze*, the material boundary *sensu stricto*, which denotes more the actual physical surface itself.

As the universal stream of boundary-setting, the earth is simply the law of this rift, interruption or tear, and it is in *this* sense that we must understand the meaning of the earth’s ‘*Sichverschließens*’. The earth’s self-closedness is not the sort of closedness that would correspond to the withdrawal or concealment that would be the counter-force of unconcealment; closure is not the *opposite* of unconcealment or clearing,

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<sup>12</sup> GA 5, 51/38.

*Unverborgenheit* or *Lichtung* – i.e., *Sichverschließens* is not *Verborgenheit*. It is rather that which always and necessarily *accompanies* and *accomplishes* beings' *dis-closure*, *Erschließung*, within the open; it is an intrinsic and essential *feature* of *Erschließung* itself as the being's liberating upsurge out of *Verborgenheit* and into *Unverborgenheit*. Closure is the *modus operandi* of disclosure; it is not that from which disclosure must wrest itself but rather immanent to this very wresting. As the upsurge from *Verborgenheit* to *Unverborgenheit* (*Lichtung*), *Erschließung* is always and necessarily realized through an 'enclosing', *Verschließens*, in and through which beings are set back into their boundaries and thereby sheltered and preserved within their outlines. And it is precisely as the law of this enclosing that the earth itself is the self-closed-up and undisclosable, *Sichverschließende* and *Unerschließbare*: it is 'openly illuminated as itself only where it is apprehended and preserved as the essentially undisclosable [*Unerschließbare*], as that which withdraws from every disclosure [*Erschließung*], in other words, keeps itself constantly closed up [*verschlossen*]'.<sup>13</sup>

This idea of the immanence of closure to disclosure, and the essential distinction between this inner unity on the one hand and the opposition between disclosure and concealment on the other, is brought out clearly in the context of Heidegger's discussion of the *Streit* and the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 33/25.

*Urstreit*. Only insofar as we keep these two strifes separate can we make sense of Heidegger's consistent refusal simply to equate world and earth with the revealing and concealing of beings. At first glance, Heidegger appears to contradict himself when he says, on the one hand, that truth 'is present only as the strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition between world and earth', or again that world and earth 'are essentially in conflict, intrinsically belligerent', as 'they enter the strife of clearing and concealing', while simultaneously maintaining, on the other hand, that 'world is not simply the open which corresponds to the clearing, [just as] earth is not simply the closed that corresponds to concealment'. It *appears* as though there were a single strife that could be designated in either of two ways, the terms being thus equivalent. But in actual fact, and more precisely: 'Earth rises up through world and world grounds itself on the earth only insofar as truth happens as the ur-strife between clearing and concealing [*Lichtung und Verbergung*]'.<sup>14</sup>

Let us examine this in more detail. On the one hand, there is the strife of the being's rising up out of concealment into the light of unconcealment, into the open of a world, which is the happening or event of truth:

Truth establishes itself as a strife in a being that is to be brought forth

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 50/37, 42/31.



only in such a way that the strife opens up in this being; the being itself, in other words, is brought into the rift [*Riß*].<sup>15</sup>

And again, and more precisely:

The essence of truth is in itself the ur-strife [*Urstreit*] in which is won that open centre within which beings stand, and from out of which they withdraw into themselves.<sup>16</sup>

The ur-strife, then, is the strife of truth. But on the other hand, this ur-strife, this 'truthing', 'can only happen in such a way that what is to be brought forth, the rift, entrusts itself to the self-closing that rises up in the open. The rift must set itself back into the pull of the weight of the stone, into the dumb hardness of the wood, into the dark glow of the colours'.<sup>17</sup> The *Riß* is accomplished just when the upsurging being is enclosed within its *Umriß*, its outline, by being set back into its *Grenze*, the material boundary provided by the wood, stone, colour, etc. The earth, to repeat, is not the material itself but rather the law of this enclosure and outlining; we must always distinguish between four

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 51/38.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 42/31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 51/38.

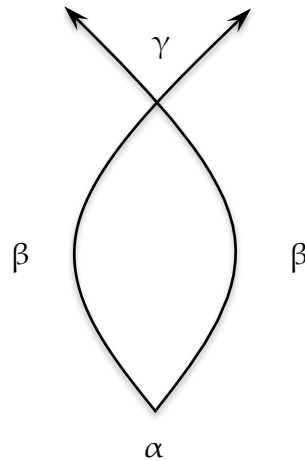
things: the *moment* of the rift or interruption (*Riß*); the *completion* of this rifting through the enclosing outline (*Umriß*); the inner *principle* of this enclosing (*Erde*); and finally the material boundary itself (*Grenze*) that provides the concrete *occasion* for some ontically specific kind of enclosing-outlining (in wood, in stone, in words, etc.).

This setting-back of the being into the material in accordance with the law of closure is the most proper meaning of the *Streit* as opposed to the *Urstreit*. If the *Urstreit* represents the strife of truth, the general cosmic struggle through which the being is wrenched from concealment and released into the open of a world, then the *Streit* proper represents the corollary action of the law (the earth) that establishes the boundary through which this releasing is realized. This means, somewhat paradoxically though entirely consistently, that the *Streit* is something like the 'essential trait', *Wesenszug*,<sup>18</sup> of the *Urstreit* even while it is also – along with the *Urstreit* – one of the primal 'contestants', *Gegenwendigen*, of the *Streit* itself; in other words, the *Streit* is *at once* the strife between world and earth *and* the strife between the strife and the ur-strife itself, insofar as the latter signifies the opposition between beings' upsurge into world (i.e., worlding) and the setting-back of everything that arises into its *Umriß* and *Grenze*, outline and boundary (i.e., earthing) – or put simply, insofar as the *Streit* is internal to, or a structural feature of, the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 42/31.

happening of be-ing/truthing itself, φύσις in the widest sense, as the *Urstreit*. The following diagram should make this somewhat clearer:



Here  $\alpha$  represents the *Urstreit*, the upsurge of *Erschließung*, disclosure, as the wrenching of the being out of *Verborgenheit* into *Unverborgenheit*, into the openness of world. On the other hand,  $\beta$ , as the natural curvature of  $\alpha$ , represents the earth, i.e., the self-closed law of closure that accompanies the upsurge of disclosure and accomplishes it *as disclosure*, a law that is *at once* immanent to *and* the primal vis-à-vis or contestant of the *Urstreit* itself. Accordingly the *Streit* is given as the structural tension between  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , disclosure and the law that bends its trajectory from within in such a way as both to challenge and to realize it. As for  $\gamma$ , it denotes the *Riß*, the moment of the being's initial arrival into its *be-ing*, the interrupting rift/tear effected by the activation of the bending, closing law. Finally, the total lens formed by  $\alpha\gamma$  signifies either the *Umriß* or the *Grenze*, the contour or boundary, depending on

whether one has its outlining/circumscribing function or its materiality principally in view.

When Heidegger stresses that it is the work of art that first lets the earth be an earth,<sup>19</sup> it is *this* sense of the earth as the law that he has in view. As a being pure and simple, the work is drawn into the rift like every other being, but as a work of art, it is always something more: an *incarnation* that captures and preserves the rift as such. This happens because, in the work, the material is not simply absorbed into the outline but rather is allowed to linger and shine in its materiality. The Greek temple, for example, 'does not let the material disappear' into its structure but instead 'allows it to come forth for the very first time' into the open:

The rock comes to bear and to rest and so first becomes rock; the metal comes to glitter and shimmer, the colours to shine, the sounds to ring, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the heaviness and massiveness of the stone, into the firmness and flexibility of the wood, into the hardness and gleam of the ore, into the lightening and darkening of colour, into the ringing of sound, and the naming power of the word.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 32/24, 52/38f.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 32/24. Cf. 34/25.

It is not the material itself that is captured and illuminated (this or that colour or sound), but rather the very ‘setting-back-into-materiality-in-manifestation’ of the artwork as a being arising into unconcealment. In other words, the power of the work of art does not consist in its making the visible more visible, but rather in its making the invisible visible for the first time.<sup>21</sup> This is art taken in its broadest possible sense. From this perspective, it is not simply the truth of some particular being or some determinate historical world that is set to work in the artwork, but indeed the truth of the whole cosmic counterplay of rising up and setting back, of manifestation and bounding materialization, or simply, the truth of truth as such. The truth of the work-being of the work is its setting to work of the truth of truth as unconcealment: ‘the work is the fighting of that fight in which the disclosure of beings as a whole – truth – is won’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking With Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 131f.

<sup>22</sup> GA 5, 43/32. ‘The picture which shows the peasant shoes, the poem that says the Roman fountain, does not merely show what these isolated beings as such are – if, indeed, they show anything at all. Rather, they allow unconcealment with regard to beings as a whole to happen.’ In short, in the artwork, ‘that which is as a whole – world and earth in their counterplay – achieves unconcealment.’ It goes without saying that

If we now pause and take stock of what we have established thus far, it is not difficult to see that the earth qua boundary-setting law is rather inert from the point of view of an interest in life. The earth is nothing negative, and yet it nonetheless has no positive content of its own: its opacity, density, impenetrability, inflexibility, invisibility, etc. all convey – precisely as they do with regard to the animal and its ‘behaviour’ – an essential passivity. It is *being itself* that actively coaxes beings out of concealment<sup>23</sup> and into the open; the earth itself does nothing in particular, is not productive in any way. If the manifesting of beings (‘world’) and their material gathering and fixing in place (‘earth’) can be understood as the two moments of the primal agon of being, it is only symbolically. In reality the strife is a *self*-striving, the ur-strife and its essential trait. The earth is indeed that in which ‘the openness of the

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this has little if anything to do with ‘art’ as a cultural institution. Art here is just another signpost pointing in the direction of the question of Being itself. From this point of view, any being that serves to draw the ur-phenomenon of the strife of concealment-unconcealment out into the open and let it linger there is a work of art (cf. 73/55).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 49/36: ‘[T]he essence of unconcealment belongs to being itself...it is being which, in virtue of its essence, allows the freeplay of the openness to happen, and introduces it as *a place of the sort* in which, in its own manner, each being arises.’

open encounters the highest form of resistance',<sup>24</sup> but *this* resistance is not an active and autonomous force, a law unto itself; it is rather only the natural and inverse tension of being itself. The law is the law *of being, of worlding*; it is the internal, self-legislation of the world, signifying nothing more than the reserve and restraint intrinsic to the simple spontaneity of φύσις.

#### B. The earth as intuition: the primal homeland

Matters stand very differently with the second and more intuitive image of the earth. Here the earth does take on a real independence and autonomy, and it is precisely this autonomy that makes room for a certain kind of life. This intuitive earth comes to the fore in the image of the *heimatliche Grund* – the primal footing, native ground or homeland. The homeland, Heidegger says, is that upon which all world-historical dwelling is set back and established: 'On and in the earth, historical man finds his dwelling in the world.'<sup>25</sup> Two things are immediately apparent from this statement. For one thing, it is no longer a question of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 57/42.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 32/24. Cf. 28/21: 'Early on, the Greeks called [the] coming forth and rising up in itself and in all things φύσις. At the same time φύσις lights up that on which man bases his dwelling. We call this the earth.'

the relation between earth and world but rather of that between earth and our *being-in-the-world* – our existence. ‘World’ in this sense denotes, not the spontaneous rising up and passing away of all things, but rather something like the ‘all-governing expanse’ of the manifold ‘paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, endurance and decline acquire for the human being the shape of its destiny’<sup>26</sup> – the scene of those ‘broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people’,<sup>27</sup> the place where that people ‘first returns to itself for the completion of its vocation’, etc. The earth is thus akin to the immovable base (the ‘originary ark’ [*die ur-arche Erde*], to borrow Husserl’s phrase<sup>28</sup>) where these essential decisions are forged and accomplished. And for another thing, and perhaps more intriguingly, this earth that grounds our historical existence is something which we ourselves are not only ‘on’ but also somehow ‘in’;

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 28/21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 35/26.

<sup>28</sup> The phrase, but not the concept, since Husserl’s ‘*Erdboden*’ is, in the end, nothing more than the world itself in its aspect of originary ontological fixity. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl, Leonard Lawlor (ed.), Bettina Bergo (ed.), *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 117-31. (I discuss this further in ch. 5, n. 21 below, 226.)



our dwelling is founded in and through our being 'on and in' the earth.

From these observations two main questions follow. (1) What sort of a 'thing' must the earth *be* such that we can be said to be 'on and in' it (for surely it can no longer be the law), and further, such that this being on and in is itself the founding of our existence? Moreover, insofar as the displacement of the notion of boundary-setting by world-founding by no means disqualifies *a priori* the idea of a primal world-earth strife (since the strife designates only the *relation* between world and earth, and does not depend in the least on the precise way in which these happen to be understood), we must also consider how to situate striving vis-à-vis something like world-founding, i.e., how a founding can also and equally be a striving. And (2), what is the nature or *character*, the principal features, of this 'being on and in...', and of the earth itself as that on and in which we are in a founding way? Heidegger does not raise either of these questions explicitly. The answer to the first must be deduced logically from what we understand of Heidegger's philosophy more generally. The answer to the latter can be gleaned from certain passages in the artwork essay itself.

### 1. Life as 'being-in-the-earth'; the earth as the zone of life

The earth qua homeland is not the law, for the law, as the internal bending or curvature that accomplishes the rising up of beings into their

material outlines, is too abstract to be able to function as the foundation of our historical dwelling or as something which could be related to in the manner of an 'on and in'. But if not the law, then what? The answer appears to be obvious: the earth is simply the land itself in the most prosaic sense – viz., that unique and familiar configuration of physico-geographical elements that constitute the 'natural surroundings' within which a people always already finds itself situated, e.g., topographical features, weather and climate patterns, native flora and fauna, etc., or in a word, everything that goes to make up what we think of as constituting our sense of *place*. And indeed this is precisely how Heidegger seems to describe it. The earth is manifest in 'the rocky ground', 'the storm raging above', 'the light of day, the breadth of sky, the darkness of night', 'the invisible space of the air', 'the raging of the surf', and so forth. It is that which we encounter in 'the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind', in 'the dampness and richness of the soil' and the 'self-refusal in the fallow and desolate wintry field', in 'the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls', and as the giver of the 'ripening grain'.<sup>29</sup> The earth is thus sketched out in terms of the weather and the seasons, daily rhythms and even the rigours of manual work. This familiar earth is one that is as far as possible from the inner legislation of φύσις: the self-refusal,

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<sup>29</sup> GA 5, 28/21, 19/14.

*Sichversagen*, of the desolate field is something entirely distinct from the self-closedness, *Sichverschließens*, of the boundary-setting law. This is a visible but also a thick, deep earth; likewise it is an active and productive, pliable and penetrable earth, one that is susceptible to engagement and transformation.

However, we have only to recall the numerous passages in *Being and Time* and elsewhere on the *Umwelt*, the enviroing nature, in order to perceive the inadequacy of this view. For insofar as the land is a *being*, it is an *intraworldly* phenomenon and thereby *already* conditioned by the earth qua world-founding. The land, in other words, is not prior to those 'simple and essential decisions' that are made in connection with the earth but rather their outcome or effect. And for this reason it can neither found nor strive with the world, since it makes no sense to suppose that a manifest being could found, let alone strive with, its own horizon of manifestation. Moreover, it is easy to see that this does not apply to the land exclusively but to beings as such, beings as a whole qua beings. The earth can *never* be interpreted as just one more being amongst beings, since in every case this would lead to the same paradox, viz., that of a ground that is grounded by what it grounds. It is important to grasp this in its properly ontological sense. One may argue, more or less persuasively, that the natural environment is always at least partially determinative of the formation of human society, culture, etc., but this would be to look at the matter from a strictly

*ontical* perspective, since all of these things, qua manifest beings, are by definition subordinate to the world. But ontical founding is meaningless here; what is at stake is precisely the relation of the world *as such*, of every world qua world, to the earth as something like a primal homeland. Accordingly the most proper formulation of the question is thus: what 'is' the earth such that it can function as the vis-à-vis, the founding power and primal contestant, of the whole of that field within which something like culture itself can first arise?

To frame this question in a slightly different way (for here we begin to penetrate to the heart of the matter): It is evident that a vast gulf separates the theoretical from the experiential conditions of this earth-homeland. In theory the earth is world-founding and thus ontologically anterior to beings as such, which renders it abstract and virtually inaccessible, more akin to the boundary-setting law. Experience, by contrast, only ever knows the earth as something concrete – something visible and visceral, a thick, palpable, hands-on reality – and therefore cannot but perceive the earth as a being or a totality of beings, e.g., the land. Accordingly, the question has to do with whether and how these two aspects can be reconciled: whether the foundational can be brought to visibility and the visible made foundational, or better, whether the homeland can be thought as tangibly as a being without itself being construed as a being – in other words, understood as something that functions like the law but is apprehended more like the land.

Now to this problem there can be only one solution: to construe the earth as neither subordinate nor superordinate to the world but rather, and somewhat paradoxically, as ontologically *equivalent* to the world – that is to say, as something formally identical to, but actually and radically distinct from, the world as the horizon of disclosure of ‘be-ing’ – and consequently to understand the notion of founding as a *reciprocal* rather than a one-way relation. In other words, the earth must here be interpreted as something like an *autonomous intra-horizonal zone, layer or dimension of manifestation* – a kind of doubling or folding of the open itself, equiprimordial with the world-fold, within which things come to announce themselves, not as ‘beings’, but rather in some unique and exclusively ‘earthly’ way. Specifically, everything that we were initially inclined to interpret as a description of the land – wind, rain, surf, storm – must now, as essentially earthly rather than worldly phenomena, be understood to be amenable to a mode of presentation that is not only not a *be-ing* but also in some fundamental sense determinative of all being.

Moreover, this solution has a crucial corollary: if the earth is interpreted as an autonomous zone of manifestation, then this implies a coeval and concomitant mode of *participating in* or *partaking of* this zone in virtue of which the zone is first opened up as a zone. Yet it is clear that this cannot be any merely ontic kind of partaking, a spatial relationship between two things present at hand (e.g., the water is in the

glass). Rather, just as the zone never exists prior to the partaking but is in fact created by it, so too does the partaking create the entity, that is, determine its mode of being, define it *as* what it *is*. Accordingly, in exactly the same way that we say of a world-partaking entity that it is 'in-the-world' – that its partaking of the world is equivalent to its being-in the world – we must also say of an earth-partaking entity that it is ontologically defined by something like a 'being-in-the-earth'. To posit the earth as a zone of disclosure is necessarily to co-posit an ontological 'intraearthliness' as its condition of possibility, i.e., that mode of 'in-being' without which the very idea of the zone qua zone would be meaningless.

In this way, then, we arrive at a provisional answer to the problem of the 'in': the phrase 'on and in' the earth should really be read as, 'on, or more precisely, in'; the 'in' supplants the 'on' just insofar as the ontological supplants the ontic, in other words, insofar as the customary perception of the earth as a thing, 'a mass of matter', 'the merely astronomical idea of a planet',<sup>30</sup> gives way to the far more expansive, onto-phenomenological notion of the earth-*dimension*.

Now it is precisely this 'being-in-the-earth' that might be taken as pointing to a third, latent sense of life in Heidegger. Life, in other words, is here understood as an originary being-situated (i.e., an

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 28/21.

ontological pre-situatedness) within the earth-zone in exactly the same sense in which existence is a being-situated within the world-zone. Such a notion seems to capture life in its most basic and phenomenologically accurate sense: not as any hidden impulse or mechanism, but instead, and simply, as the actual partaking itself, the sheer living-through of life. For life *as it is lived* is never a concatenation of physiochemical or metabolic states and processes (an economy of drives, urges, instincts, etc.), as science would have it, but nor is it anything like the coursing and surging of an *élan vital* – and least of all is it the anorganic ‘Life’ of metaphysics as a constant becoming, eternal flux and flow, ceaseless differentiation, etc. Before all of this, and completely irrespective of the truth or usefulness of these ideas, life is a wholly unique form of in-being, a residing amidst things that is not in the least an existing amidst beings.

Two important consequences follow from this description of phenomenal life as a being-in-the-earth:

(1) If our historical dwelling is held to be founded, not on the earth taken as a particular being (e.g., the land), but rather on our most concrete experiences of living life, it follows that the full being of the human is no longer understood as a *pure* existence, i.e., a being-in-the-(pure-)world, but rather as a *unitary* ‘being-in-the-world-and-in-the-earth’, or simply, a ‘*living-existence*’, or again, to rehabilitate an earlier expression (but in a different sense), a ‘*living/worlding*’. This is simply

to say that the *Da*, the 'clearing' or 'there' to which the human always already finds itself delivered over, is essentially a composite reality, an imbrication of radically heterogeneous zones: the differential unity of the world-earth. Indeed Heidegger seems to acknowledge this explicitly when he describes existence itself as being *thrown* (*geworfen*) into the earth:

The truly poeticizing projection is the opening up of that in which human existence [*Dasein*], as historical, is already thrown [*geworfen*]. This is the earth (and, for an historical people, its earth), the self-closing ground on which it rests...<sup>31</sup>

Thrownness as such is a bivalent phenomenon, applying not only to existence but also and equally to life; the human is historical just insofar as it is thrown into the earth (or conversely, history itself has an *a priori* earthly component).

(2) If world and earth 1) are understood equally as autonomous and heterogeneous zones of disclosure the joint and co-originary partaking of which is held to constitute the essence of the human way to be, and 2) are supposed to be locked in primal and perpetual strife, it follows that the strife is identical to this partaking – which is simply to say, the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 63/47.



*manner of the unification of world and earth in and as living existence as the essence of the human way to be.* Striving is the nature of living existence, the enactment of the human essence, the *self*-striving of the human qua human. The human is not a mere third party to the strife, a cool observer of some external event, but rather the very front or theatre – the *Riß*, the interface – where the collision actually occurs. To employ a Bergsonian image, the human is a ‘hyphen’, a portal through which passes a constant flow of movement, the link that binds world and earth together into the dynamic unity of the world-earth.

Accordingly, founding must be interpreted in terms of striving: world and earth are *co*-founding of the open itself in the primal collision of life and existence, i.e., founding just *is* the opening up of the open through this collision (indeed the very idea of the strife implies that these are taken to be mutually arising and reciprocally determining). To say that humanity ‘founds its historical dwelling on and in the earth’ is simply to say that those simple and essential decisions that shape the destiny of a people are always made in the context of direct confrontation with and reaction to the phenomena of earthly life. History is grounded in life and grows out of life, out of being-in-the-earth, even as it folds back upon life and transforms it. A pure existent, were such a thing conceivable at all, could never be historical in the full and genuine sense, and for the simple reason that it could never struggle and strive with the earth. Such an entity could certainly

interpret things, remember and transmit them, but this in itself would not yet amount to a history, which is inconceivable outside of a relation to life.

## 2. Being-in-the-earth as hardship and insecurity

As the site of the collision of world and earth, the human is the being that shapes its destiny through constant confrontation with the raw experience of living life; the world itself is the sum of real effects, the lasting evidence of and testament to, those simple and essential decisions forged in the struggle against the earth. Now the very notion of a strife or struggle already intimates the answer to the question of the precise character of this 'living experience', i.e., what this experience must be such that its relation to the world and existence is one of conflict and strife. It is clear that we are dealing here neither with the pure, non-objective openness of the original unitary *it lives/worlds*, nor even with the orectic life of the Aristotle lectures (i.e., ζωή as ὄρεξις in the sense of a δίωξις and φῦγή, pursuit and avoidance of an ὀρεκτόν), but instead with a life that is deeply and intimately tied up with the concrete factual situation of the peasant woman going about her daily routine, a situation which Heidegger famously reads off from van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes*.

Let us cite the passage in full:

From out of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth. In the crudely solid heaviness of the shoes accumulates the tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lies the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls... This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, wordless joy at having once more withstood want, trembling before the impending birth, and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs *to the earth* and finds protection in the *world* of the peasant woman.<sup>32</sup>

It is a life, in short, that is profoundly shot through with insecurity, pain and suffering. Affirming what Western thought has insisted on from the very beginning, to live is to know hardship and struggle, to experience need and want and to withstand these, to tremble with fear over the impending and the menacing, to be stricken with worry and anxiety in the face of the unforeseen and outstanding, the unknown and death. To live is, in a word, to *survive*, to 'live on' (*survivre, überleben*). Accordingly the earth is much more in line with the depiction of nature given in *Being and Time*, viz., as that which 'stirs and strives', *webt und strebt*,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 19/14.

which ambushes and assails us, comes over us and enthralls us, *uns überfällt*,<sup>33</sup> and thus with a mode of revealing whose currency is not a 'be-ing' but rather a kind of primal force or intensity. It is not that wind, rain, storm, etc. manifest themselves as assailing or enthralling *beings*, but rather that assailing, enthralling, provoking and the like can themselves be understood as *forms of manifestation* in their own right, forms that get *realized* or *embodied* in certain things that, from a worldly or 'existential' point of view, are apprehended and known as, e.g., 'rain', 'wind', 'storm', etc. The earth, we might say, is the medium of these forms, or more precisely, of their activation; it is the primal zone of agitation, provocation, incitement, etc. *as such* – that dimension of the open in and through which things are able to reveal themselves in stirring, provoking, agitating and exciting sorts of ways – to which dimension there necessarily corresponds an autochthonous and autonomous modality of in-ness or in-being characterized by experiences of worry, anxiety, hardship, privation and struggle. With this characterization of life as hardship, worry and need, the ancient view of life as desire is fully rounded out and completed. To the notion

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<sup>33</sup> GA 2, 95/100. It is worth pointing out that in *Being and Time* Heidegger still associates this stirring, striving and ambushing 'nature' with, specifically, the *landscape*, *die Landschaft*, which, as we have seen, is precisely what the later concept of earth will radically call into question.

of desire as a going-after and going-away-from, we must add the experience of hardship as a withstanding of want within an open zone of hostility, insecurity and provocation, a withstanding on which all essential historical decisions are predicated. *History as such – the destiny of every human community – unfolds always and only in the context of the struggle against need, privation and insecurity.*

### III. The strife, labour and equipment

Let us now, in the final section of this chapter, turn our attention to this coalescence of earthly life and worldly existence and consider precisely where and in what manner the strife is most immediately and intuitively encountered and engaged, which is to say, the exact moment of the creation of the world and history from out of, and in constant reaction to, the life-experiences of hardship, insecurity, need, etc. This moment of creation must equally be the moment of genuine emancipation – that is to say, the moment where world and earth, and therefore we ourselves along with them and indeed we most of all, are first freed as such and released into what they/we most authentically are (even though this liberation must be of an entirely different sort than what happens in either the law or the work of art).

Because life is experienced as insecurity and uncertainty, the setting-up of a world naturally takes the form of a countervailing

making-secure and making-certain; the world as such exhibits an inner tendency toward safety and security (*Geborgenheit*), meaning insulation and protection from the earth's 'steady pressure', its assailing and provoking character. However, this drive to securitization does not result in a state of equilibrium but in fact exerts a stronger pressure than that which emanates from the earth itself, resulting in a polarity in favour of world:

It is, however, [the human's] world which prevails from out of the relationship of existence to the unconcealment of being. For this reason, everything with which [the human] is endowed must, in the projection, be fetched forth from out of the closed ground and explicitly set upon this ground. In this way, the ground is first founded as a ground that bears.<sup>34</sup>

There is a power discrepancy between world and earth that is associated with the human's wresting things from and setting things back upon the earth in order to secure and protect itself from the earth – in a word, with its *labouring* on the earth. World 'prevails' in and through labour, which denotes not any mindless drudgery and exertion but rather a kind of rational, calculative intervening in and transforming

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<sup>34</sup> GA 5, 63/47.

of the earth that enervates the earth, separates it from what it can do. In this way, by means of labour, the human mollifies and subdues the earth, turns it into 'a ground that bears'.

Crucially, however, this prevailing-enervating does not imply or condone the fixity of an absolute *domination* of world over earth. To the contrary, labour is what first 'assures the earth the freedom of its steady pressure',<sup>35</sup> which is why prevailing is itself a 'founding' (i.e., the earth is founded through the prevailing attained by labour, or better, the earth first becomes what it *is* only in and through the living human's creative, subduing response to its challenging assailing and assaulting). In other words, granted that the world tends toward a state of security, this security cannot become total or repressive insofar as this would effectively *nullify* the earth and therefore humanity along with it, all three of these co-depending for their being on the fluidity and dynamism of the whole of living existence. Labour is always, at least in its *pure* state, the establishing of an historical world as a domain of *relative* security and of *partial* insulation by means of a *measured* extraction of things from the earth that does not thereby deprive the earth of its ownmost power to pressure and provoke.

In addition, labour is never accomplished through pure bodily effort, but always and only with the aid of certain instruments of labour,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 19f./14f.

i.e., with equipment. This is precisely why Heidegger can write that for the labourer (the human insofar as she labours), world and earth are concentrated in the equipment itself (and not, say, on the surface of the body): 'World and earth exist for [the labourer] and those who share her mode of being only here – in the equipment.'<sup>36</sup> The strife is lodged in the equipment as its ground, and for this reason the equipment, although it does not by itself fetch forth or set up, nonetheless comes to embody and exude precisely the sort of agitation and volatility that characterize the life-existence bond as the site of all fetching forth, setting up and the like. Clearly it is not the woman's shoes that toil and trudge, that are filled with pain, loneliness, worry and joy, and that hunger, tremble, shiver and die. It is the woman herself who experiences these things – in and on her aching stomach, her calloused hands and feet, windburned skin, cracked lips and sweaty brow. Rather the shoes are the focal point and distillation of that toiling, trudging and trembling by which the woman fends off the earth's assaults and attends to her needs by erecting, fortifying and ensconcing herself within a realm of limited and relative peace and security where something like a 'vocation' can be pursued, a 'destiny' can take shape, etc. (In this way the shoes themselves are charged, electrified, pulsating with energy, brimming over with life: the shoes *vibrate*, as Heidegger says.)

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



Equipment therefore plays exactly the same role in the artwork essay as it does in *Being and Time*: in both texts our practical, everyday dealings with equipment constitute a privileged point of access through which the structure of the open can be seized and laid bare in its most authentic state. However, there is one significant difference that corresponds to the essay's intimation of the earth as precisely something like the zone or horizon of our life-experiences of hardship and insecurity: whereas in *Being and Time* equipmentality is held to consist in a general usefulness or serviceability, *Dienlichkeit*,<sup>37</sup> arising from the nexus of references and involvements that frame the world and bind it together, in the artwork essay, by contrast, where the earth is only one aspect or element of a unitary world-earth, this very *Dienlichkeit* itself is grounded in the equipment's simultaneous *co-participation* in the world *and* the earth, its 'protected belonging', which Heidegger terms 'reliability', *Verlässlichkeit*:

The equipmentality of equipment consists indeed in its usefulness [*Dienlichkeit*]. But this itself rests in the fullness of an essential being of the equipment. We call this reliability [*Verlässlichkeit*].<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> GA 2, 105ff./109ff.

<sup>38</sup> GA 5, 19f./14f.

Reliability constitutes the 'essential being' and 'original nature' of equipment; it arises out of a 'more distant source', a 'deeper origin' than pure usefulness, which is only its 'necessary consequence' – '[the] former vibrates in the latter and would be nothing without it'.<sup>39</sup>

Reliability is thus the ground of serviceability just insofar as the world-earth is a more adequate and originary characterization of the open than the pure world. Hence it is precisely in reliability that world and earth are encountered most properly and first set free as what they are:

In virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is admitted into the silent call of the earth; in virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is certain of her world...for it is the reliability of the equipment which first gives the simple world its security and assures the earth the freedom of its steady pressure.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, just as serviceability can dissipate and reduce the tool to a mere present-at-hand thing, an object of a detached observation, so too can reliability wither away and vanish; the equipment then dwindles and deteriorates into the 'boringly oppressive usualness' of *mere*

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

serviceability, 'sheer utility'.<sup>41</sup> This is as much as to say that the basic ontological categories sketched out in *Being and Time* (*Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit* and the like) are fundamental features only of merely useful equipment, or more precisely of equipment taken strictly under its attribute of pure serviceability and nothing besides; they do not characterize equipment grasped at its deepest and most essential level. Availability alone and as such, simply being on hand for a task, does not yet guarantee that a thing can be classified as equipment proper, for nothing has been decided as to its reliability.

But what *is* reliability? Is this at all self-evident? I note that I have several tools on hand for various jobs, but do I thereby have any genuine equipment? Do any of these tools exhibit so-called 'protected belonging', or are they all rather characterized by 'sheer utility'? Wherein lies the essential difference between these two determinations, and what is the criterion that allows me to decide? Heidegger himself neither answers nor even raises this question; nevertheless, from what we have already established it is not difficult to work out. We note first

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 'The individual piece of equipment becomes worn out and used up. But also, customary usage itself falls into disuse, becomes ground down and merely habitual. In this way equipmental being withers away, sinks to the level of mere equipment. Such dwindling of equipmental being is the disappearance of its reliability.'

that common sense has a natural and well-corroborated solution ready to hand: reliability is at bottom a *temporal* distinction, i.e., the reliable is more *durable* than the merely useful and for that reason *outlasts* it. However, as is often the case with common sense, matters are in fact the exact reverse of what seems obvious *prima facie*. We recall that the human, in order to function as the site of the strife, the place of passage of world and earth, must labour in such a way that, in taming and transforming the earth for the sake of its own protection and security, it takes care to avoid neutralizing the earth and in that way assures the earth the freedom of a possible counter-assault. Accordingly, reliability must refer to, or at least must be indissociable from, a certain anti-neutralizing quality inherent in the instruments of labour themselves. That is to say, reliability involves, paradoxically, a kind of inner *vulnerability*, a structural being-exposed to the earth that puts the equipment itself to the test of the earth's steady pressure. To be sure, reliability cannot be separated from durability, from a capacity to bear and withstand, but this withstanding must always be such as to resist totalization – to surrender a bit of its own assailing power and to that extent open itself up to the possibility, and indeed the eventual necessity, of being broken by the power of the earth.

The merely useful, by contrast, exhibits the exact opposite tendency, viz., toward an unmitigated sealing off and securing that *depressurizes* and thus eviscerates the earth, thereby establishing a relation of total

hegemony of world over earth. The *modus operandi* of this absolute conquest of the earth is mass production and the attendant cycle of infinite circulation and disposal. What mass production actually produces and reproduces is, strictly speaking, the *Use as such*: the use is torn loose from the object, purified and released into perpetual motion, while the object itself is reduced to a shell, a mere host that the pure use inhabits for a fleeting instant before moving on to another host, perfectly identical and infinitely exchangeable. In this way, by means of the radical impermanence of the object, the use attains a radical permanence that transcends time and space: it is immortal, omnipresent 'being'. And it is just this constant presence of the use that spells disaster for the earth insofar as it entails not simply a lack of exposure and vulnerability but in fact the absolute rejection of all exposure. For pure use is utterly invincible and inexorable: insusceptible to every pressure, it outlasts and withstands every obstacle. The moments of breakdown so famously described in *Being and Time* simply no longer apply here. Indeed the objects themselves *must* break down, are designed and guaranteed to break *a priori*, since this is precisely what ensures the constant flow of a use which itself never decays. Accordingly, quite to the contrary of what common sense thinks, it is in fact the readymade, throwaway items of everyday life, the fungible and frangible detritus of capitalist production, that are the most durable of all insofar as they transmit a pure, absolute and indomitable use that

defuses the power of the earth long in advance and through careful calculation.<sup>42</sup>

It also follows from this that the human can never strive with the earth, in the manner of founding an historical world on and in the earth through labour, with the aid of the merely useful insofar as the latter is earth destroying and therefore essentially anti-historical. As the human progressively gives itself over to the merely useful, to that extent it relinquishes its historicity and thus its very humanity; it becomes more and more a pure existence in a pure world defined by and devoted to nothing but pure utility.

Yet precisely here we must raise a fundamental question concerning this 'progression'. If it is true, as Heidegger says, and for reasons which we shall explore in greater detail in Chapter 6, that the balance of living existence is naturally tilted in favour of existence, of the erecting of a

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<sup>42</sup> Here it is important to add that the neutralization or destruction of the earth does not *necessarily* entail the destruction of the planet, since the earth is here understood not as a being but rather as a zone of manifestation. One can imagine a highly efficient and thoroughly 'sustainable' form of constant production that maintains the health of the planet even while it irreparably demolishes the life-zone through an absolute saturation of use that strips the earth clean of its natural power to pressure and provoke. We shall have more to say about this below.

world as a making-secure against the steady pressure of the earth, then does it not follow that pure utility resides *already* and *essentially* at the core of reliability itself? Are these not separated merely by a difference of degree rather than kind? Does not the initial act of labour itself push us down the slippery slope toward the apotheosis and absolutization of use? And finally and most importantly, does this not imply that our very *being* is coextensive with the *process* of our own *devitalization*? In which case we should be forced into a decision as to what sort of entity we *prefer* to be – the process or the destination – since it is clear that we cannot be both at once. The former demands that we hold fast to the earth as the primal counter-thrust of the world and the ground of history; the latter demands that we neutralize the earth – which also means, neutralize lived life itself – through a strategy of maximum fortification and securitization, thereby ushering in the end of history as the era of pure freedom.

#### IV. Conclusion

The various issues that we have been exploring here all have their root in the ur-problem of the being of the earth as such, i.e., what and how the earth must be such that it can function as the primal contestant of the world, can serve to found our historical dwelling in the world, etc. Without addressing this problem explicitly, we have nonetheless in the

course of our enquiry provided two distinct possible answers: either the earth is the law of the world, the inner principle of boundary-setting, or else the earth is something like an autonomous experiential zone of manifestation alongside the world. Let us now bring our discussion of the artwork essay to a close by considering briefly the interpretive dilemmas that arise if one fails to take this problem into account. Michel Haar's classic study, *The Song of the Earth*, offers us a case in point. Here is not the place to enter into an extended critical analysis of the finer points of Haar's complex and multifaceted investigation. What is noteworthy in this context is simply the way in which Haar finds himself compelled time and again to return to the same conundrum of the structural instability of the earth's position vis-à-vis the world and consequently of its dubious historicity and even sense.

Haar is adamant that the earth 'must submit to the law of appearing', i.e., must always 'show itself in a world' and 'enter into the light of being without which it would be inaccessible'.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, he recognizes that just here 'a difficulty inheres in the enigmatic anteriority of the Earth as indeterminably *already there* beforehand'.<sup>44</sup> Obviously the earth 'enters into the truth of being since it is sayable', but in what sense if not 'as that which escapes the History of Being'? 'Historical and yet

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<sup>43</sup> Haar, op. cit., 99, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 101.



non-historical', the earth is that which 'presents to the Open its greatest opposition' and its strongest resistance.<sup>45</sup> In this way the earth is manifest as the 'impenetrable', the '*non-foundational foundation*',<sup>46</sup> which Sallis likens to Hegel's description of the earth as the 'universal individual' or 'universal negativity'.<sup>47</sup> Undoubtedly the earth is the *Grund*, the 'undergirding stability', and yet the earth 'does not have at hand "by itself" the power of giving a ground'; the earth is 'source and resource, but only to the extent that it is wrought and enters into a world'.<sup>48</sup> For this reason it is by no means clear that or how the earth is intelligible at all, that the name of the earth is anything more than an empty word:

[If] Earth remains sheltered from the historical transmutations of truth which mould being, to what language can we have recourse when it comes to its specific determinations? If in all phenomenological rigour it is impossible to speak outside of being, on what basis can we *say* the Earth, i.e., shed the light of being on this obscure region? Could Heidegger have been forced to deal with

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 5f.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 57, 64 (original emphasis).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5f.

Nature – as Plato did *hylé*, pure ‘material’, or place (*chôra*) – on account of a ‘bastard reason’? For he seems to be compelled to have the forever-nocturnal and non-manifest foundation of the world manifest itself in the clarity of truth.<sup>49</sup>

From the perspective of the interpretation we have given above, it seems that Haar has amalgamated the content of the two images of earth (concept and intuition) without taking account of their difference in form. Accordingly, even as he distinguishes a multiplicity of ‘senses’ of earth,<sup>50</sup> we should have to respond that you may carve up the earth into as many diverse aspects as you please, but that if you have not somehow managed to draw the earth back down to the level of the world itself, you can and will only ever arrive at the same basic contradiction: viz., that of a ground that must be grounded by what it grounds. Indeed, how could the earth ever disclose itself within the open of being without thereby being itself a being? How could the earth, insofar as it must appear within the open as its horizon, also ‘present to the Open its greatest opposition’? How could that which is granted on the basis of the open ever oppose or resist it? How could the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 13. This ‘bastard reason’ would amount to ‘a necessary detour requiring the non-manifest to become manifest’.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 57.

earth ever manifest itself within the domain of history, in a pre- or non-historical way? How could a foundation be 'non-foundational'?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Virtually all of the interpretations of the meaning of the earth ventured by scholars fall into this trap insofar as they think the earth in an entirely intraworldly manner. An excellent case in point is Kenneth Maly's construal of the earth as a zone of connectedness, the possible ontological ground of which is never questioned; see his 'Earth-Thinking and Transformation' in Ladelle McWhorter, Gail Stenstad (eds.), *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 45ff. Additionally, François Raffoul takes up the problem in his paper, 'Heidegger and the Aporia of History' (especially 113-18; full URL in the bibliography), although in my opinion Raffoul comes no closer than Haar to making sense of the problem. Raffoul rightly disagrees with Haar insofar as the latter finds the earth to be something akin to a 'permanent non or extra-historical substrate' or a 'deep non-historicity of Dasein', something 'quasi-eternal' and hence 'metaphysical' (115, 117). But in the end, Raffoul, too, is compelled to fall back onto a kind of 'bastard reason', finding an ineluctable 'aporia' lying at the core of the strife. This aporia is no longer that of the possible relation between a non-historical, quasi-eternal substrate and the realm of history itself, but now rather that of a grounding in absencing and self-withdrawal. The earth, writes Raffoul,

Faced with these and similar difficulties, there are only two alternatives, which in the end perhaps amount to the same thing: either one takes cover behind something like a 'bastard reason', or else one simply sweeps the whole problem under the rug and considers the earth from a purely functional perspective, in terms of its importance

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citing Andrew Mitchell, 'supports and bears precisely by withdrawing'. Earth grounds world precisely 'as a withdrawal of the ground, as a remaining-away of the ground, as *Ab-grund*, a "groundless ground"'; 'the earth is the ground of history insofar as it withdraws in its self-seclusion' (117f.). Now I freely admit that I can make no sense whatsoever of this notion of a ground that grounds in a withdrawal of itself precisely as ground. Raffoul, for his part, manages to salvage coherency only by sacrificing the earth to the world, i.e., by identifying the earth with *Er-ignis* through the common denominator of withdrawal: 'History happens from a withdrawal, as Heidegger would claim with respect to the sendings of the epochs of being. History does not rest upon the earth as on some substrate, but occurs from the withdrawal proper to the "sendings" of *Ereignis*' (118). The 'earth' is now nothing more than the withdrawal immanent to the self-sending of Being itself. It goes without saying that this has virtually nothing to do with what we intuit as earth – i.e., as depicted in the situation of the peasant farmer.

for the logic of the artwork. By contrast, we have attempted to navigate a third approach. On our reading of the artwork essay, the very notion of an earth that is 'submitted to the law of the world'<sup>52</sup> – whether as a non-historical intraworldly non-entity, non-foundational foundation or whatever else – is absurd and impossible. Either the earth *is* the law of the world, i.e., the inner law of φύσις, the boundary-setting principle that limits and accomplishes beings' self-arising into unconcealment, and thus that in and by which the world is fixed in place and allowed to repose, or else it is a zone of disclosure all its own, one which, being locked in perpetual strife with the world as the field of the essential decisions of an historical people, is co-productive or co-constitutive of the open as such. But the earth cannot be an entity, still less a non-entity, that emerges within the world, in conformity with the law of the world, but that at the same time, and in an utterly strange and mysterious fashion, eludes the world, which is to say, escapes all history, all interpretation, all contingency. Such a concept of the earth as a kind of intraworldly constant is unthinkable; the earth cannot submit to the world at the very moment that it is supposed to condition it. Indeed the problem of the earth is, in a certain sense, perfectly analogous to the problem of the world in *Being and Time*. The founding insight of that text is that, unless one grounds the world in the essence

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<sup>52</sup> Haar, op. cit., 49.

of human-being itself, the world is an impossibility: it resides either without or within the mind exclusively, neither of which is acceptable. But precisely the same sort of dilemma holds true of the earth. Unless one *also* puts the earth back in the human, back in the 'there' of which the human partakes, such that it stands on an equal footing with the world, the earth can only ever reside entirely without or within the world. The former leads to metaphysics, the latter to a dubious hermeneuticism, neither of which accords with our actual intuition of the earth. The whole problem, in short, comes down to this: that one first strips the human of the very earth in which it participates essentially by virtue of its life, then bewails its absence and agonizes over its possible recovery.

## Chapter 4

### Earth as Attribute in the Economy of the Fourfold

In our discussion of the artwork essay we said that in order for the earth to be able to function simultaneously as the foundation of the world and the primal contestant of the world, it is necessary to treat the earth as a kind of originary zone, dimension or field *in* which we ourselves *are* *qua* living, in which case this primal contest or struggle can be understood as occurring in and as our own being, at the midpoint of our living existence. Our aim in this chapter is to demonstrate how this sense of earth, which was never explicit in the first place, is almost totally revoked once the earth is taken up into the conceptual economy of the '*Geviert*', the 'fourfold' of earth and sky, gods and mortals, which features prominently in Heidegger's later writings, and especially in a handful of notable essays written from the late 1940s through the 1950s that mark a new phase in the ongoing dialogue with Hölderlin and that concern the themes of building, dwelling, things, language and poetry. Specifically we shall try to show that whatever world-independence and life-significance the earth might be said formerly to have possessed are erased by the dominance of a more expansive and rarefied notion of being and world, much in the way that the universality of factual life

was eventually undone by the increasing prioritization of being-understanding and attendant reduction of the world to a world-of-beings. This appears a somewhat odd thing to say, since from one perspective the fourfold seems to herald the full maturation and refinement of the concept of the earth rather than its diminishment or eclipse, and since, further, we have just gone to some lengths to extract from the artwork essay an interpretation of life that is virtually identical to the definition Heidegger gives of dwelling – namely, a ‘being on the earth’. Yet being *on* the earth is not the same thing as being *in* the earth (or being ‘on and in’ the earth, as the essay puts it). Everything, in fact, turns on this miniscule distinction between the ‘on’ and the ‘in’. The ‘in’ designates openness, participation; the ‘on’, by contrast, reflects an emasculated earth, one that has been emptied out, made ever loftier and more abstract and deprived of its original connection with life.

To be sure, this is not at all to say that Heidegger himself had little regard for the earth or held it in low esteem. Quite to the contrary, one cannot fail to be struck by the intense *desire* for the earth that radiates from almost every page of his texts, and indeed at times so brilliantly and passionately that one might be tempted to conclude that it, and not the cynosure of ‘Being’, is in all actuality the secret engine driving his thought forward. One might even go so far as to surmise that Being is less the pole star of thought, of thinking proper, than a kind of massive black hole forever threatening to swallow it up, a giant vortex yawning



between thought and the earth. For at the end of the day the problem has to do, not with what Heidegger wants to say, but with what he is not allowed to say, what the logic of his own discourse places outside the jurisdiction of thought itself. And whereas the artwork essay risks breaching this internal limitation (albeit tentatively and unconsciously), and in so doing partially succeeds, as with the texts on factual life, in opening up a new realm for thought to inhabit, the texts that deal with the fourfold, by contrast, are much more restrained and respect it entirely. It is precisely this restraint, this conservative acquiescence to the sovereign authority of Being, that bodes ill for the earth – not only ‘conceptually’ but above all practically and ethically insofar as, and for reasons we shall explore in detail later on, we are left with few if any real options for rescuing the earth from what presently appears to be its imminent and total demise.<sup>1</sup>

Let us begin simply by asking what the fourfold is at its most basic level. It goes without saying that Heidegger’s notoriously abstruse presentation of this concept has had the unfortunate double effect of shrouding it in a fog of sibylline impenetrability and consequently of depriving it of any semblance of philosophical rigour. And yet, at its

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<sup>1</sup> Which, to repeat, does not necessarily imply the imminent demise of the planet called ‘Earth’; earth-destruction and planet-destruction are two wholly different matters, even if they turn out factually to coincide.

core, it is remarkably straightforward, and in fact nothing particularly novel in the context of Heideggerian thought as a whole. At least this much is absolutely clear: the fourfold is, at bottom, nothing more or less than the world.<sup>2</sup> The world, we recall, is neither the totality of beings nor an empty vessel in which beings are contained and dispersed, but rather the manifestation of some determinate configuration of beings in the midst of which an historical people finds itself situated and out of which it acts and shapes its destiny. An historical world, in other words, is a happening or an event of Being; thus the fourfold, as the world, amounts to yet another graphic displacement of Being, a gesture formally identical to the rewriting or the crossing out of Being, which is simply to say, a way of pointing to the presencing of beings in their being without invoking 'Being' as such as the secret agent or principle of this presencing (and we know that the crossing out of Being was intended precisely to evoke the fourfold).

At the same time, the fourfold describes both the genesis and structure of the world, its 'worldhood'. Genesis in the sense that the four have an active, constituting role: they are the elemental forces or powers (*Seinsmächte*) that create or 'world' the world through their 'mirror play', 'gathering', 'fouring' or 'ringing'. But structure in the

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., 'The Thing', GA 7, 181/PLT, 179f.: 'The fouring presences as the worlding of world.' Cf. 'Language', GA 12, 19, 21/PLT, 199, 201.

sense that these powers are themselves the four faces or dimensions of which the worlded world is composed. They are not four pieces of some fifth thing, 'the world', but are absolutely immanent to it. Thus every world is four-dimensional – not in any spatiotemporal sense, but only in the sense that the four are always and necessarily present in some grounding, constitutive way, even if only in the derivative modes of absence or concealment. Put slightly differently, we could say that every *ontically* or historically determinate world involves some particular *ontic* manifestation and configuration ('gathering', 'ringing', etc.) of the four elemental powers that together go to make up the *ontological* structure of the world as such. Somewhat like Spinoza's substance, the world is both self-expressive and a true unity-in-multiplicity: it explicates ('worlds') itself in and as the unitary four, which in turn, being something like its 'attributes', implicate it essentially.

Nevertheless, quite unlike the attributes of substance, the attributes of world are not 'forms' across which beings unfold in parallel, as though any being could be taken under any one of them (now as earth, now as sky, etc.). Still less can these powers or attributes be understood as 'Ideas' or 'things-in-themselves' that lurk behind or before their various historical manifestations. Rather, the four might best be described as 'cosmographical' schemata, i.e., as 'categories' useful for dividing up actually arisen beings into really distinct types. Accordingly there are always, only and everywhere beings, in shifting proportions of

variable modes of presentation; the four have no 'essences' of their own, no 'as such' or default state that one could access in its original purity and 'let be' once and for all. For instance, the fact that, for us today, the gods have fled does not mean that some 'actual' transcendent deities have withdrawn themselves and now obstinately refuse to show themselves; it only means that beings no longer manifest themselves to us in the modality or attribute of divinity. But there is no 'divine as such' that has decreed that this shall be the case. Instead, here as with all of the elemental powers, there is only ever a constant metamorphosis, a ceaseless waxing and waning, an infinite repetition of different ontic figurations, and it is only with a certain arbitrariness that we carve up the world into discrete dimensions or powers, self-contained historical epochs and the like. Even the number 'four' itself is of only nominal significance; it 'does not name any calculated sum',<sup>3</sup> but is rather a symbol for the mutual co-arising and inner unity and coherence of the world. In this sense the fourfold is merely a kind of heuristic device, an approximation: every world involves some unique arrangement of terrestriality, celestially, divinity and (mortal) humanity. Indeed these might be compared to the primary colours that the painter combines in infinitely varied ways in order to generate a true multiplicity of compositions. Except that these colours do not admit of any pure state,

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<sup>3</sup> GA 4, 170f./194f.

but only a range of degrees and intensities, and although we can discern temporary patterns and wholes, discrete periods, these can never be traced back to the founding act, gesture or intention of any particular artist. This is why the worlding of the world is the greatest mystery of all; whenever it is a matter of *explaining* the world, of revealing the hidden logic of the unfolding compositions in cognition, one can only resign oneself to the 'impossible' silence of the 'inexplicable' and 'unfathomable' abyss.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately it cannot even be attributed to the oblivion of Being.

Now from this we can already see wherein the dispossession of the earth consists. In our reading of the artwork essay, we said that Heidegger suggests an image of the earth as an autonomous zone that, along with the world, is constitutive of the open as such, a zone that is independent of being but that, just because the human partakes of both zones in an equally originary way, nonetheless shapes and influences

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<sup>4</sup> GA 7, 181/PLT, 179f.: 'The world presences by worlding. That means: the world's worlding cannot be explained by anything else nor can it be fathomed through anything else. This impossibility does not lie in the inability of our human thinking to explain and fathom in this way. Rather, the inexplicable and unfathomable character of the world's worlding lies in this, that causes and grounds remain unsuitable for the world's worlding.'

the self-announcing of beings within the world-zone as the zone of being. World and earth are drawn together and conjoined for and within the human as their point of passage and held there in a state of tense agitation and vibration, a primal and perpetual strife. But in the context of the fourfold, this agonistic tension is completely discharged. Movement does not cease, it is true, but it is radically altered, from a back-and-forth struggle to a kind of dancing in the round.<sup>5</sup> Henceforth the image of the ring or the circle predominates, the symbol par excellence of wholeness and eternity; the language of conflict and strife is displaced by that of peace, protection and preservation.<sup>6</sup> What has happened here? Simply this: *the earth has been thoroughly and permanently reappropriated by the world*. In what turns out to be a genuinely dialectical moment, the earth as the primordial vis-à-vis of the world, that which served to breach the homogeneity of the open and to clear a free space for life, is now reabsorbed by the world in the course of the world's own self-overcoming – not obliterated but indeed preserved as an integral component of a *sublated* world that has swelled to onto-cosmological proportions. No longer a zone in its own right, the earth is reduced to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 181f./180: 'The mirror-play of world is the round dance of appropriation [*der Reigen des Ereignens*]...The round dance is the ring that joins while it plays as mirroring.'

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 151/149.

an intraworldly feature or ingredient; it is merely *the world itself taken under its attribute of terrestriality*. And it is just for this reason that there can no longer be any discussion of a world-earth strife – ‘For how could the consequence ever attack the ground on which it stands?’<sup>7</sup> Just as it would never occur to us to say that the notes of a musical composition are in conflict with the composition itself, however *internally* discordant it may be (i.e., however discordant the piece might sound as a unitary whole), so too it makes no sense to suppose that the world is locked in perpetual strife with one of its own essential features.

If something like this is in fact the case, it would appear to have serious ramifications for the concept of dwelling, which is defined, after Hölderlin, as an originary ‘being on the earth’, or more precisely as ‘the manner in which mortals are on the earth’.<sup>8</sup> For now it seems, at least initially, that dwelling could only amount to a purely schematic notion, and up to a point this is in fact the case. Heidegger describes the four aspects of the world as tending to divide and align themselves into two symmetrical pairs. The fourfold, as if by a process of meiosis, stretches and splits into a twofold: divinity-celestiality and humanity-terrestriality, the world above and the world below, or simply, Heaven

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<sup>7</sup> GA 5, 100/75. That is, how could an attribute ever struggle against the whole of which it is an attribute?

<sup>8</sup> GA 7, 149/PLT, 147.

and Earth. Just as the gods and the sky comprise Heaven, the world above, so do mortals and the earth, their terrestrial 'house',<sup>9</sup> comprise Earth, the world below; they are bound together, inherently drawn to one another, as the components of the below-world. The round dance of the elemental powers is thus a kind of cosmic 'wedding' dance: the powers are 'betrothed' to each other as Heaven and Earth, which in turn are betrothed into and as 'the whole intimacy' of the 'in-finite relation', the four all folding together into the connubial unity of the world. Every step, turn and manoeuvre of this dance is an event, a new phase of the world's worlding; nonetheless, within each new phase mortals and the earth are always aligned with each other by virtue of the compositional structure of the fourfold itself. 'Being on the earth' signifies in the first instance nothing more than this: that mortals and earth are natural partners within the fourfold as a whole. To say that mortals are 'on the earth' is simply to say that they are not in the sky, that the divinities are not on the earth or that the earth is beneath the sky; it is an indication of an *a priori* cosmographical positionality, of a precise arrangement within the world's total ontological configuration.

Be that as it may, at a deeper level it only raises the following question: does not this very betrothal itself, this structural unity of Earth, imply its own unique mode of openness onto things, one that,

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<sup>9</sup> GA 4, 16f./35.



while perhaps subordinated to the openness of the world, is nevertheless radically distinct from and therefore irreducible to it? Moreover, would not such an opening, as a mutual claiming of mortals and the earth, by and within the world's worlding itself, both imply and demand something like an abiding concern for and stewardship over the earth? In other words, insofar as we dwell, are we not entrusted with a profound responsibility for the earth, namely, to 'cultivate' and to 'care for' the growing things of the earth and to keep watch over the rest of its earthly inhabitants? And in that case, may we not take 'dwelling' to be the founding word for a new kind of 'ethical', i.e., a more 'poetic', living in harmony with the 'natural world' – a 'living', that is, that renounces all hubris and sovereignty, all will to will and technological domination of nature and instead simply 'lets nature be'?

Now it is certainly true that Heidegger describes the earth as a realm of spontaneous generation and growth, as the 'nourishing' ground, the 'serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting'<sup>10</sup>; it is also true that mortals, as the ones who are structurally positioned on this nourishing, growing earth, are the ones who 'cultivate the growing things of the earth'<sup>11</sup> and tend it. But precisely here we must exercise the most extreme caution and restraint. Above all we must take care not to

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<sup>10</sup> GA 7, 151, 179/PLT, 149, 178.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 149/147, 195/217.

be lulled into familiar, comfortable territory by the tranquil, hypnotic beauty of Heidegger's agrestic *mises en scène*. We hear words such as 'dwelling', 'poetry', 'peace', 'gathering protection', 'homecoming' and the like, and straightaway our minds are whisked off to some medieval Swabian paradise, where sylvan peasants push lumber carts over stone foot-bridges and the soft tinkling of cowbells can be heard far off on the mountain slope. But in fact this is all so much window dressing, the futile expression of a perpetually stifled longing – not for a forgotten past but rather a forgotten future – which is why Heidegger is always eager to remind us that a mere example should never be mistaken for an ideal,<sup>12</sup> and that it can never be a question of a nostalgia for some former halcyon age or bygone form of life. Accordingly, if we take this fidelity seriously, if we are not led astray by the usual chain of superficial allusions, we shall see clearly that the concept of dwelling, *such as it stands*, can function neither as a primordial opening up onto a free and independent earth nor, consequently, as the foundation for a new 'ethics' of 'poetic living'.

Mortals, situated on the growing earth, tend and cultivate the earth – this is true. But crucially, such tending and cultivating *in themselves*, however earnest, are not yet, and in fact can never attain to, proper dwelling, and for the simple reason that it is dwelling itself that is the

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, 162/160.

ground and condition of possibility of every manner of building, tending, caring and cultivating. Only because mortals *already* dwell can they tend and cultivate the growing earth. Likewise, only because mortals dwell can they also fail or refuse to tend it, or rather tend it in different ways, for example, by attacking it, forcing it to bend and submit to their will, plundering and devastating it (and perhaps all the more civilly, efficiently and 'responsibly' precisely through a certain way of cultivating it). It is dwelling itself that provides the directive for every concrete means or program of dealing with the growing earth. Indeed, and even more fundamentally, it is dwelling that determines that mortals, being stationed on the earth, will necessarily attend to the earth *in some way or other*, that they will be the earth-tenders. Dwelling is at once the origin, guide and measure of mortals' attending to the earth, and it is just for this reason that it must never be confused with, or taken as an endorsement or prescription of, any particular mode of attending, however intuitively desirable. Stewardship and spoliation equally are only *possible* ways of attending to the earth that arise within the general horizon of dwelling. Mortals are positioned on the growing earth (together they comprise Earth, which is beneath Heaven), but always in such a way that, by virtue of dwelling, they must attend to and deal with the earth in a way that is somehow already sketched out by dwelling itself, which is why dwelling, strictly speaking, is not 'being on the earth' as such, but only the *manner* in which mortals are on the

earth. The real question has therefore to do, not with any specific mode of attending, but rather with this 'manner' itself in accordance with which mortals are given their first assignments and roused to action. In short, what does it mean to be on the earth in a 'dwelling' sort of way?

Now on this point Heidegger is perfectly clear. Moreover, although it is construed in a decidedly more elliptical and even mythological vocabulary, the core of his position has not changed since *Being and Time*. Dwelling means that the human is on the earth in such a way that it always and essentially partakes of the worlding of the world *as such and as a whole*, or in the new lexicon, of the 'ringing' or 'dancing' of the four world-powers in their unity.<sup>13</sup> It means that the human stands in the open of Being, is admitted into the 'infinite' and 'mediating' centre of the ring and there receives the four as a 'gift' and lets it occur, which is why the centre is called '*Ereignis*',<sup>14</sup> the 'event of appropriation' by which Being itself and human beings are delivered over and entrusted to each other. The human is thus unique among beings in that it

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 151f./149f.

<sup>14</sup> See Heidegger's diagram in *Contributions* (GA 65, 310/218), which, as Jeff Malpas argues, can be taken as a visual representation of the transition in Heidegger's thought from 'The Origin of the Work of Art' to the later essays beginning with 'The Thing' (see Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006], 225-8ff.).

possesses an essence that carries it above and beyond its own limited and contingent historical manifestation as one of the four and into the dimension where an encounter with Being itself is bound to occur. The human, in other words, is still a *transcendence*: at once one of the world-powers *and* the vis-à-vis of Being through which these powers are disengaged.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of how mortals come to stand within this or that concrete historical milieu, mortals as such, in their essence, their *humanitas*, always simultaneously surpass or exceed *every* historical determination insofar as they partake of the *Da*, the zone of freedom where the historicity of the historical itself comes to pass and where beings are freed, spared and preserved<sup>16</sup> in their self-arising and self-announcing, in whatever way this announcing occurs. In this sense dwelling is not only nothing new, but in fact it is one of the oldest and most foundational concepts of Heideggerian thought. It is what Heidegger had already characterized very early on as the 'being-in' (*In-*

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<sup>15</sup> GA 7, 180/PLT, 179: 'Mortals are who they are, as mortals, present in the shelter of Being. They are the presencing relation to Being as Being.' More precisely, there is always a twofold sense of transcendence in Heidegger: on the one hand, a being-in-the-world, a standing outside oneself in the world, and on the other hand, a being-*beyond*-the world, a projective separation from and surpassing of the world itself.

<sup>16</sup> On freeing, sparing and preserving, see *ibid.*, 151/149.

*Sein*) structure of the human being-there, the factual-historical 'Dasein',<sup>17</sup> such that we can simply say that, at bottom, dwelling is

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, in both §19 of the SS 1925 lectures and §12 of *Being and Time*, as in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' over twenty years later, Heidegger employs virtually identical etymological derivations to link dwelling to human-being as a kind of proximity to being. In SS 1925 and *Being and Time*, the *in* of *In-Sein* is derived from a hypothetical original *innan*, meaning *wohnen, sich aufhalten*, to dwell or reside, to remain in a place. Related to this is the strong preterite *an*, which is a being accustomed to something, *ich bin gewohnt*, and a looking after something or a taking care of something, *ich pflege etwas*. In turn, this being accustomed to something is a dwelling alongside, *bei*, which is connected to both *bauen*, to build, and *(ich) bin*, (I) am. Likewise, in the later essay, *bauen*, building, is connected to *wohnen*, dwelling, which means *bleiben, sich aufhalten*, to reside in a place in the manner of a *hegen* and *pflegen*, a cherishing, protecting and caring for. And as before, this concerned residing alongside or in the midst of...(beings) is originally related to *bin* in its various permutations; thus *ich bin* means: I am/I dwell/I reside concernfully in the midst of beings and protect them as they manifest themselves. In this way dwelling is, for us and as our proper way of being, the most 'habitual', the *Gewohnthe*, an inhabiting of the open. Finally it should be noted that even in SS 1925 Heidegger identifies

nothing more or less than an originary 'being-in-the-world' as a being-situated in the midst of beings and a being-open to Being as such. In a word, it is human being-there, *menschlichen Dasein*, in its 'basic character' – i.e., *existence*: 'Dwelling...is the basic character of being in keeping with which mortals exist.'<sup>18</sup>

To dwell, then, is to be on the earth in an 'in-the-world' or 'innerworldly' sort of way. Indeed the 'on the earth' is drawn up into the 'in-the-world' just insofar as both mortals and the earth, and along with them the gods and the sky, i.e., the whole of Heaven and Earth together, could not dance their round dance and announce themselves at all were there not some entity already *there*, 'in-the-world', ready to receive them as their partner, their vis-à-vis. All the same, this talk of dwelling as only a 'way' and 'manner' of being on the earth appears to suggest that there are other possible modes of being on the earth besides dwelling. However, this would be fundamentally mistaken. For humans' being-positioned on the earth is always a tending of the earth that takes its directive from dwelling, and since dwelling is the

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'caring for something' and 'cultivating something' as possible *modes* of in-being/dwelling. See GA 20, 213f./158f.; GA 2, 72f./79-81 (see Macquarrie and Robinson's helpful footnote on p. 80); and GA 7, 149-51/PLT, 147-9.

<sup>18</sup> GA 7, 163/PLT, 160. Cf. 193/215.

prerogative of the human, the human is the only being that can 'be on the earth' in the strict sense. This is why Heidegger can also *equate* dwelling with being on the earth as though they were identical; dwelling is at once the manner of being on the earth *and* being on the earth as such, and there is no contradiction here. Thus, for example, in no way can being on the earth be predicated of plants and animals by way of the mode of being of 'life', for 'life' is never a being on the earth, and precisely because 'life' does not take its assignments and direction from dwelling. It is true that plants and animals 'live', but just because their 'life' does not involve anything like a receiving-openness of and onto the round dance of the four powers, plants and animals, however they manage to scurry around on the surface of the earth and engage with entities, can never *tend* the earth in any way and therefore can never be positioned *on* the earth. Indeed, if plants and animals could be said to be 'on the earth' in any genuine sense, then either the purportedly self-evident 'abyss of essence' separating human beings and animals would have to be called into question in a radical way, which is something Heidegger could never allow, or else the fourfold should have to be re-construed as a *fivefold*, and plants and animals should have to be granted the status of a power in their own right. But this is so far from being the case that we should rather have to say exactly the opposite: viz., that plants and animals *are* the earth, that is to say, are the concrete parts or features of the earth, are caught up in the



ceaseless play of φύσις, of the coming forth and passing away of all growing things out of and back into the earth. 'Life' just *is* this virtual economy of organic growth and decay, plants and animals being only particular, finite 'modes', as it were, in which it is temporarily realized or actualized.<sup>19</sup> It thus follows that mortals' being on the earth is also and essentially a *being over life*, a domination and a subordination of life, for now mortals' tending of the earth is of necessity a tending of life in a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 151/149 (Cf. 'The Thing', 179/178): 'Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal [*Gewächs und Getier*].' That is, plants and animals are *ontologically identical* to rocks, water and all the other self-arising features of the earth-element. Cf. GA 54, 211f./142: 'Φύσις, φύειν...is said of the earth, ἡ γῆ φύει – the earth lets come forth. We often, and even correctly, translate φύειν as "growing" [*wachsen*], but in doing so we must not forget to think this "becoming" [*Werden*] and "growing" [*Wachsen*] in the Greek manner as a coming forth, out of concealedness, of the germ and the root from the darkness of the earth into the light of the day.' Also, finally, GA 65, 277/195: 'The numbing and life's falling-back [stem] from within the incipient opening [*Eröffnung*]. Correspondingly there is also no closure, insofar as what is alive is not taken along with – "earth" (rock, plant, animal). Rock and river are not without plant and animal.'

way that accords with whatever form the earth-power as a whole assumes within the context of the current historical epoch. In this way, and more than ever before, mortals are radically alienated from life; mortals can be thought of as 'living beings' only at the expense of the total loss of their distinctly human essence – viz., as a 'measureless mass of men' indistinguishable from the 'countless objects everywhere of equal value' which they ceaselessly order and manipulate.<sup>20</sup>

'Being on the earth', then, far from being a mode of being in its own right, is rather a function of the single and all-encompassing open of existence. And insofar as it is characterized as a 'saving' of the earth, we must learn to hear this word in its distinctly Heideggerian sense. 'Saving' cannot be taken or mistaken for any particular, contingent form of tending the earth (e.g., for cultivating the soil, conserving nature, etc.). Instead, to 'save' the earth, to 'let the earth be', can only mean to receive and protect the earth, along with the sky, gods and mortals, the four world-powers as a unified whole, *in their self-arising and however they arise, i.e., as a gift of Being itself*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> GA 7, 184/PLT, 182.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 152/150: 'Mortals dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, [i.e.,] its presencing.' Our problem, i.e., the problem of the entire history of the West since its inception, is *not* that we do not dwell or that we no longer dwell (and, by implication, that we do not

This will be Heidegger's final and most consistent position with respect to the earth. Whereas initially the earth emerges as a true countervailing power to the world, carving out a niche for what could potentially blossom into a richer and fuller notion of life, eventually the earth succumbs, like factual life before it, to the order of the world itself and is thus *consumed* by it.

Let us conclude with the following observation. The sum of the questions under consideration here might easily be dismissed as some frivolous academic obsession over the proper interpretation of a handful of recondite terms and theories, but this would be unfortunate, for these concepts and ideas have quite real and, from a certain point of

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tend or no longer tend the earth), since this would mean that we do not or no longer exist, which is absurd. Rather the problem is that we dwell in such a way that dwelling itself is covered over and forgotten. Likewise, the problem with our rampant destruction of the earth lies, strictly speaking, *not* in the destructiveness *per se*, but rather in the fact that the mode of revealing on which this destructiveness is founded (i.e., the disclosure of things as brute objects, inventory for the disposal of an absolute will) is one that conceals our originary relation to Being itself. It is possible that this same mode of revealing could be realized in relations that 'heal', 'cultivate', 'preserve' and 'care for' the earth even while they reduce the earth to an infinite storehouse and petrol station.

view, potentially catastrophic implications, and hence questions concerning their ultimate meaning, significance and value are not taken up idly. In particular, if one regards the earth as merely an aspect, attribute or schematic feature of the world, and the world itself as an utterly impenetrable, quasi-mythical auto-destining insusceptible to any possible human control or influence, then when it comes down to the concrete task of repairing the earth – and it cannot be denied that the earth has been subjected to the most vicious siege for over two centuries now – one finds oneself deprived of every possible strategic intervention save one: that of ‘releasing’ oneself into this destining and of learning to accept it as a ‘gift of Being’. But it is easy to see that this is not any intervention at all, but rather the total abnegation of intervention. If humans are not the cause but only the agents or perpetrators of this siege, if the siege is merely the effect of some quasi-transcendent movement (or at best, of a mutual abandonment and oblivion, *Seinsverlassenheit* and *Seinsvergessenheit*), then not only is all intervention futile, but in fact it is part and parcel of the problem itself inasmuch as it is itself an actualization of the particular form of tending the earth commensurate with its present historical instantiation as mere inventory (pure willing, calculative, ‘strategic’ ratiocination, egoic self-assertion, etc.). Consequently real action in the world is supplanted by a kind of soteriology and pistology: one can only wait and prepare for the ‘saving power’ in the form of a return of a god or gods, or the

inauguration of a new and wholly other beginning of history. However, if one thing is clear to us today, it is that faith and salvation are no longer viable options for dealing with much of anything, and least of all with the kind of ecological disaster that draws nearer each day that we refuse to rein in the forces of relentless growth and production. The most urgent question, then, is how to intervene without exacerbating the very crisis necessitating the intervention. Taken in a purely *formal* sense, this properly Heideggerian question is a sound one; yet we cannot even begin to address it until we have discovered a more originary determination of life as an autonomous mode of being and of the earth as the zone of actually lived life. Thus it is in this direction that we must now proceed.

## **Part Two**

### **Toward a Heideggerian Life-Phenomenology: an Outline Sketch of Some Basic Themes**

## Chapter 5

### An Initial Phenomenological Characterization of Being-in-the-Earth

#### I. Preliminary considerations

Our reading of Heidegger in Part One has brought to light two key moments or elements of something like universal, primordial life: on the one hand, the possibility of an 'orectic' form of in-being as such, a component of the pure openness of the *it lives/worlds* that does not involve apprehension of be-ing; on the other hand, the possibility of an autonomous layer or dimension of disclosure, the earth, in which things are manifest, again not as beings, but now as the assailing, assaulting, enthralling, etc., these themselves being intimately bound up with experiences of want, hardship, insecurity and the like. Our aim in this chapter is both to reconcile these two moments in the unitary concept of being-in-the-earth and to disentangle their various predicates: desire, pursuit, assault, need. This must be accomplished in such a way as to respect the two main desiderata of the universality of pure life and the singularity of pure existence. We shall accomplish this reconciliation by means of the following twofold strategy. First, we will advance a

positive thematic analysis of *being-in-the-earth* taken as the formal definition of phenomenal or actually lived life. Building on what we have already established, we will attempt to flesh out this being-in-the-earth with some minimal, general structural content – and here it will be necessary to guard against falling back onto inadequate notions of life that deprive the concept of being-in-the-earth of its force and significance. Second, we will investigate the relationship between being-in-the-earth and being-in-the-world, life and existence, with the intention of arriving at a more comprehensive interpretation of our own human way to be in its totality, i.e., as a *living existence*. This investigation will assume two different and quite particular forms, and will prove to have somewhat far-reaching implications. We shall outline these more clearly below.

#### A. The concept of multiple zones

It is important to get clear at the outset as to what is intended by the notion of life as an ‘extra-existential’ mode of being or of the earth as an ‘extraworldly’ zone of manifestation. We have already seen that it was precisely Heidegger’s own rejection of this possibility that led him to deny the animal any real and meaningful participation in the open. For if life and existence constitute two independent sorts of in-being, then this is as much as to treat them as ‘modes of perceiving reality’; one then



has not only to decipher the meaning of this 'reality' but also to confront the problem of the impossibility of 'transposing' oneself from one mode of perceiving into the other. For this reason, i.e., since we ourselves never live, the animal's life becomes something mysterious and obscure. But it should be obvious that there is no contradiction in thinking a single field or open within which things are disclosed in any number of ways in accordance with specific structural constraints. Someone will doubtless object: 'But how does one ever purport to "get outside" the world, as you say – that is, outside the realm of existence and into some wholly "extraworldly" life-sphere?' Here we should have to respond that this is to turn the world into its exact opposite, i.e., into the very thing the concept of world was designed to refute. For the world (to repeat) is neither the totality of the actual nor the vessel in which this totality would be contained; rather it is *the realm of manifestation insofar as manifestation happens 'beingly'*, that is, in a *be-ing* sort of way. But there is no tremendous difficulty in supposing an entirely separate 'happening', one that could occur in addition to, alongside or even coevally with this worldly, 'beingly' happening.

In fact some such view as this is prefigured in Heidegger's earliest work, in what might loosely be described as a 'theory of multiple worlds'. The notion of the world is flexible here; insofar as the world is a unitary phenomenon, these multiple worlds might just as well be described as 'sub-worlds', dimensions of world, etc. In any case the idea

is straightforward enough. As Heidegger explains in WS 1921-2:

The whole of life, in every case in a world, can be actualized in markedly distinct directions. The distinctive directions of concern set into relief respective *worlds of concern* [*Sorgenwelten*]. That toward which a factual life is directed in concern, the world in which it lives, is, however, always one that stands out from the basic worlds, which we designate as the surrounding world, the shared world, and one's own world [*Um-, Mit- und Selbstwelt*].<sup>1</sup>

To say that factual life is always a living along multiple 'markedly distinct directions' is simply to describe a living/worlding that happens in one or several sub-worlds simultaneously. These sub-worlds are not isolated realms, each totally exterior to and permanently sealed off from the others and comprising its own special inventory of entities, states, experiences, structures, modes of comportment, etc. – '[there] are no strict boundaries here; the "partitions" can shift at any moment'.<sup>2</sup> Rather we have to do with a multiplicity of co-present and interpenetrating layers, certain of which are at any given time in a relation of prominence or conspicuousness vis-à-vis the others, which for their part then recede

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<sup>1</sup> GA 61, 94/70.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 96/72.

into the background:

These worlds must not be set in order beside one another as three domains of reality absolutely delimited in advance, which quantitatively increase or decrease in content according to how many objects, things, or people 'exist' in them. On the contrary, the sense of their distinctiveness lies in the respective prominence...of the mode of caring, which itself can be motivated in various ways...A fortiori, every setting into distinct relief, whether carried out explicitly or not, is determinative for the way life then lives as actualized in that distinct world...The setting into relief is not a mere explicit paying of attention but is instead primarily a taking of direction on the part of the entire life. This means that, e.g., the setting into relief of one's own world is not a denial of the others, but, quite to the contrary... co-actualizes, and determines the sense of, an appropriation of the shared world and the surrounding world – and the same for each of the others.<sup>3</sup>

The unified totality of the realms constitutes 'the full lifeworld', which 'is in each case experienced in one of these prominences, explicitly or not'. But prominence does not mean pre-eminence or

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 94f./71.

privilege; rather 'none of the worlds has a necessarily privileged position; indeed, it is precisely characteristic of the mode of maturation of factual life to live the world in a specific indistinction of worlds'. It is thus a matter of determining the manifold structural relations and modifications of and by the different sub-worlds in their various combinations and modes of standing out and holding back. The standing out of one of the sub-worlds 'co-actualizes' the others along with it and thereby determines their sense in accordance with its own. As we have already seen, the element that consolidates these various sub-realms and unites them as realms of a single, universal 'full lifeworld' is the ur-structure of 'in-being' as such, the most primordial determination of the originary *it lives/worlds*. Accordingly, is it any great feat to imagine, in addition to the environing-world, the shared-world, the with-world and the self-world, something like an 'earth-world' as one particular sub-world in and for which concern as a relational in-being takes on its own unique form (instinctual drivenness, urge, inclination, etc.), and that, for whatever reason, does not involve anything like a being-apprehension? We could then isolate this desiring- or driving-world, analyze and describe its principal structures and features and explore its manifold interconnections with the other known sub-worlds. In this way we should arrive at an elucidation neither of classes of entities nor of modes of apprehension of reality, but instead and simply of the sub-worlds themselves in their various and

relative states of isolation and combination. Positive determination of particular *entities* could only come after the fact, that is, by way of a metaphysics of life that could ground these sub-worlds in a theory of the real as such.

That the theory of multiple sub-worlds is not easily reconciled with the continuum theory of life is apparent. For one thing, the earth-world (i.e., the orectic or instinctual world) is by no means a more primitive manifestation of one or another sub-world, but rather stands alongside all the other worlds as their equal; thus it makes no sense to suppose that one might comprehend the earth-world 'by analogy' (reductively) with some other sub-world. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent us from taking the earth-world into account in the analysis of specifically human factual life; one might, for example, examine the compound realm {earth-world + with-world} + {self-world + with-world}, that is to say, the ways in which the particular kind of with-ness characteristic of orectic life influences and modifies the ways in which other (living) human beings appear to us in the context of our own self-concern. There are several moments when it seems as if Heidegger is starting to move down this path (for example, in the scattered passages on stimulation, allurements, urge and so forth). But as we have seen, it is a path that is swiftly and decisively closed off and redirected by the more pressing problem of the meaning of being.

## B. Fixing the domain and establishing the itinerary of questioning

Phenomenologically speaking, the problem of the co-presence of multiple zones of disclosure is not a particularly urgent one. Even from a metaphysical viewpoint it does not pose insuperable difficulties. Bergson, for example, has already demonstrated that matter (i.e., images, the real) is capable of multiple forms of self-organization that accordingly yield forms of consciousness that are different not in degree but in kind, viz., instinct and intelligence. Indeed one even finds something close to this view in Heidegger himself (perhaps it is inevitable). Thus we find in SS 1927 the rather extraordinary claim that the world is that which *'devolves upon'* what is now referred to as 'nature' as what 'can also be when no Dasein exists'.<sup>4</sup> Here nature is not simply that which, within the world itself, discloses itself *as* something like the self-subsistent (i.e., not a transcendental object, an intraworldly being whose being is a kind of transworldly subsistence); rather nature is here described quite clearly as that which is actually anterior to being-in-the-world itself, something upon which the world qua world (the world as the very horizon within which even transcendental objects may first appear) may devolve or not. Of course nature 'in the sense in

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<sup>4</sup> GA 24, 241/170: 'Welt ist nur, wenn und solange ein Dasein existiert. Natur kann auch sein, wenn kein Dasein existiert.'

which we speak of “nature out there”, hill, woods, meadow, brook, the field of wheat, the call of the birds’, etc. – ‘[this] being is intraworldly’.

But for all that, intraworldliness does not belong to nature’s being...It is, even if we do not uncover it, without our encountering it within our world. Being within the world *devolves upon* this being, nature, solely when it is *uncovered* as a being [Innerweltlichkeit *fällt* diesem Seienden, der Natur, dann lediglich *zu*, wenn es als Seiendes *entdeckt* ist]. Being in the world does not *have* to devolve upon nature... Intraworldliness belongs to the being of the extant, nature, *not* as a determination of its being, but as a *possible* determination, and one that is necessary for the possibility of the uncoverability of nature... [i.e.,] being within the world does not belong to the *being* of nature.<sup>5</sup>

But in this case we may as well say that the earth, too, is the sort of thing that may or may not ‘devolve upon’ this entity, ‘nature’; the earth, in other words, does not point to anything intrinsic to nature itself, but is only, like the world, a possible form of ‘contraction’ (to use a Bergsonian term) of nature. Nature is something like *the same* that conjoins a *difference of openings* – that which lies *between* a multiplicity of zones, that onto which these zones actually open up. On this model the open (the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 240/168f.

field of disclosure, the clearing, 'there', *Da*, etc.) is simply the unitary manifold resulting from such 'devolutions' (whether one or several).

All of this, however, is irrelevant at present. It is not 'nature' that is given to us in intuition but the world – and, we are insisting, the earth. We do not require a theory of nature in order to get at the earth, although it may turn out that this view of the earth necessarily implicates some such metaphysics of nature as we have just suggested. For the time being it is simply the *phenomenon* of the earth that interests us.

Far more pressing than the metaphysical question is the epistemological one, namely: how does one identify something like an earth-zone in the first place, especially insofar as this is understood to constitute a zone in which being is somehow absent? In other words, assuming such a life-zone actually to exist, in what sense could we ever hope to know it as it is in itself? For even if we could somehow transpose ourselves into this zone, would we not be condemned to describe it from the perspective of our existence, that is to say, by drawing on the resources of the world? Would we not therefore end up once again with a thoroughly intraworldly interpretation of life? Indeed we would, if the problem had anything at all to do with 'transposition', 'going along with...', etc. – as if into some alien domain. But here we must simply assume, as a fact given to immediate intuition, that we ourselves live in the most basic sense, that life is, along with existence, constitutive of our



ownmost human way to be. Life is not some elusive, non-human phenomenon such that in order to apprehend it we would have first to leap out of our own skins and creatively reconstruct it in the imagination. To investigate life it is not necessary to try and put ourselves in the body or consciousness of some 'living being' essentially different from ourselves. Rather it is matter of learning to separate out a layer of experience with which we are *already* and intimately familiar insofar as we *are* it. We must strive to see the life that is woven so finely and seamlessly into the fabric of our existence that we scarcely notice it, must strive to see the field or the open itself as a single fabric woven from two different materials, much as we can turn our attention to a physical object and consider it now as spatial, now as temporal. That we do not see it in this way is no great mystery; indeed the reason has been described perfectly well by Heidegger himself: precisely because we are closest to ourselves *ontically*, we are furthest from ourselves *ontologically*; just because we constantly obsess over our 'selves', we remain oblivious to the *being* of this 'self'. Our own being recedes into the shadows; it is of all things the most difficult to see and describe adequately. Thus it is entirely in keeping with this observation if we here argue that, despite the analytic of existence (or perhaps, in a way, because of it), we are still not fully acquainted with ourselves, are still unknown to ourselves. At any rate, there is no 'problem of life' in the sense of situating it vis-à-vis existence. Such a problem would first have to be invented; the human

being would first have to be completely shorn of its life, such that one could then puzzle over where it has vanished to or how it could ever be 'transposed into'.

Now it is precisely for this reason, i.e., because it is always our own living that is at issue, that we not only can but indeed *must* set aside all scientific investigation of life. If life is taken simply as a modality of our own being, if we are in life and not life in us, then it follows that this actually lived life is accessible solely through self-examination and self-interrogation; the need for a collaboration with biology, zoology, ecology and the like is entirely superfluous. This stems not from any reactionary anti-scientific bias but rather and simply follows from the premises of our problem. To insist on the necessity for such a collaboration with 'life'-science suggests that our own knowledge of life is never direct but always mediated entirely by concepts drawn from and applied by the intellect – in other words, that the sum of our experience of life amounts only to a purely intellectual reflection on 'life' as a possible category or mode of being of certain *other* entities, i.e., plants and animals, adequate knowledge of which is reserved for science by virtue of its special powers of observation, and that if the philosopher has any job at all it is merely to 'interpret' what the scientist observes. But life is not 'the mode of being of plants and animals', and hence investigation of these entities is neither here nor there. Moreover, it is only because we ourselves actually live that there arises in the first

place the possibility of analyzing this lived life in its experiential primordially. The actual living-out of life has as little to do with ecology, zoology or neurophysiology as it does with organic chemistry, molecular biology or quantum mechanics.<sup>6</sup> We shall not come one single step closer to grasping phenomenal or primordial life by enumerating the various properties and features of entities that are already known to be living, not least because we could only ever do this on the basis and from out of the resources of our own living existence, the totality of our being-there, i.e., as that from out of which we draw our most intimate knowledge of life. That is to say, *in all of our intra-worldly knowledge of life is implicated our actual living itself as well as, and simultaneously, our apprehension and interpretation of this living.* It is this threefold relation to life – our own living, our intuitive apprehension of this living and our interpretation of ourselves as living – that delimits the horizon within

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<sup>6</sup> Renaud Barbaras has also insisted on this point, e.g., in his 'Life, Movement, and Desire', *Research in Phenomenology* 38 (2008), 4ff. Cf. Heidegger, GA 6.1, 323/N 1, 103 (Vol. 2): 'The essence of man may be defined...by describing him in the way one dissects and describes a frog or a rabbit. As if it had already been determined that by means of biological procedures one can come to know what a living creature is. It is rather the case that the science of biology presupposes and takes for granted in its initial steps what "life" is to mean for it.'

which every intraworldly interpretation of life arises. The life-sciences, which grasp life objectively and to a large extent in some predetermined way, can do little more than reinterpret and reduce what we shall no doubt be able to see much more clearly simply by analyzing ourselves in the classical phenomenological sense – i.e., with regard to our own being.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There are good arguments for limiting life proper to phenomenal life. For example, if one tries to define life in terms of so-called ‘vital processes’, one quickly realizes that life goes very far down indeed, to the level at which the various reactions are more or less determined and predictable. Yeast, for example, is said to be ‘alive’ inasmuch as it carries out ‘vital processes’ such as growth, nutrition, reproduction and the like. But what sort of a ‘life’ is this? ‘Nutrition’ is simply the production of enzymes to obtain carbon from sugars – i.e., little more than a series of chemical reactions. ‘Reproduction’ is achieved through budding or binary fission. Now certainly we cannot say that yeast is not alive, and yet it seems equally absurd to maintain that the life of yeast is no different from the life of, say, an elephant or an eagle, or indeed of a human being, and that the automatic programmed process of procuring carbon from sugars is commensurate with the eagle’s swooping out of the sky and seizing its prey with its talons. But the problem disappears once we make a distinction between life grasped from the perspective of

All the same, there is in fact one serious methodological barrier to this project. It remains to be shown that if we have not yet managed to arrive at a proper interpretation of life, this is by no means due (as the Heidegger of WS 1929-30 thinks) to the fact that we are fundamentally separated from living beings, as the intended objects of every analytic of life, by an 'abyss of essence' – it is rather just the opposite: *we misinterpret the life of other living beings on the basis of our own misinterpretation and misrepresentation of our own living*. The way in which we apprehend ourselves as *living* existents is wholly contrived and inadequate, and it is this deficient *self*-interpretation that provides us with the arsenal of concepts and frameworks in accordance with which the life of non-human living beings is thematized, comprehended and laid down as established fact. The precise reason why this is so is the subject of our next chapter. Suffice it to say for now that we have to do here with more than mere ontological blindness; there is a further and more insidious level of obfuscation to confront. For the meaning of 'life' and 'living' is something far more immediately accessible and intelligible to us than the meaning of 'being' or of our own way of being; everyone can provide some answer, however crude, to the question of life. And yet

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matter and life as a form of openness all its own – although, to be sure, this does not eliminate the *metaphysical* problem of determining which beings partake of phenomenal life and which do not.

the life with which we are most familiar is a gross distortion of life itself as it is actually experienced. This is the case not only for structural-constitutional but also for essential historical reasons; in other words, the self-concealment of life is bound up with the very movement of history itself. Life has become that much harder to see precisely because we literally *live less* than we did formerly; life itself has suffered a gradual and yet disastrous emasculation and diminishment. We are incapable of seeing life in no small part because it is endangered, and indeed self-endangering. This is meant in the strictest possible sense: the very openness of living itself, and along with it the earth as the zone of this living, is steadily contracting toward a zero point, an absolute self-neutralization. For these two reasons we are confronted with enormous difficulties of description.

Returning to the problem of knowledge, one might still object that insofar as (1) all knowledge and understanding are grounded in the apprehension of being, and (2) being-in-the-earth entails an absence of being, the conclusion that we can only ever know this life through the medium of the world is inescapable. This is true in a formal sense, but it is badly stated. To be sure, only for an existent, i.e., a being endowed with understanding of being, is anything like phenomenology possible in the first place. But to repeat, life is not to be thought of as some extraneous domain fastened on to the human that can only be glimpsed with the aid of a special sort of lens called 'existence'. Existence is not a

tool or an appurtenance in this fashion. If the human is a *Lichtung*, a clearing, it is the *whole* of this entity, its full living existence, that is implied; the goal is always the self-interrogation of the entire 'being-there'. This entity, the full and complete being-there qua living existence, makes a problem of itself in such a way that it aims to describe itself *as* it is by means of *what* it is, i.e., by means of what belongs to it and it alone by virtue of its unique ontological make-up. And if this living existence can only describe or express its life-dimension, bring its life to language, by way of its existential dimension, this in no way diminishes the immediacy of the knowledge of life that it already possesses simply by virtue of its actually living. Now it is perfectly true that this means we can never know life *in and for itself*, for indeed the very notion of life 'for itself' is a contradiction. Suppose an entity constituted by pure life (e.g., an amoeba, a plant); such a being could never be for itself insofar as, in order to *be* for *itself*, it would have to possess something like being-understanding as the precondition of any such self-discovery. Here we must agree with Whitehead that 'there is no way to speak of Nature in itself starting from living nature' – that the 'notion of Nature in itself is only a limit notion', an 'obscure principle', as Merleau-Ponty says.<sup>8</sup> In this sense we do indeed have a genuine

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Robert Vallier (tr.), *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (Evanston: Northwestern University

conundrum of access or 'going along with...', and should we somehow find it productive to speculate wildly on what it might mean to experience things without a trace of any sense or understanding of being, we can imagine whatever we like. But at the same time, insofar as this pure life is nothing more or less than the very same life we ourselves live, whatever we can determine of life applies *ipso facto* to life as such – but always with this caveat: from the perspective of a living existent. It is always and only the life of a living existent that we can and must have in view.

On the basis of what we have established thus far, a threefold itinerary begins to take shape. The items comprising this itinerary can also be taken as three integrated operations of a specific life-phenomenological reduction that aims to bring certain general and essential structures to light.

First, we shall attempt to sketch the structure of *life, being-in-the-earth, in itself for us*, i.e., for the living existent engaged in phenomenological reflection. In other words, we must attempt to isolate our being-in-the-earth from our being-in-the-world and to describe the former as it appears in itself, before any admixture with the latter. Here we shall restrict our investigation to the following four themes: (1) the particular form of the 'going-out-toward' or the intentionality characteristic of

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Press, 2003), 119f.



being-in-the-earth; (2) the structure of the earth itself as the zone or the 'wherein' of life, i.e., the 'earthhood' of the earth; (3) the spatiality and temporality of being-in-the-earth; and finally, (4) the lived body.

Second, we shall attempt to combine the tentative results of the analytic of life with the findings of the analytic of existence (such as we find, e.g., in *Being and Time* and elsewhere) in order to produce a general picture of *living existence in itself for us*, which is to say, the *pure* combination of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth, of the totality of living existence in its most neutral, objective state. Accordingly we shall repeat, but at a higher level, our interpretation of the above four themes in light of this new orientation: (1) the intentionality of living existence; (2) the structure of the world-earth; (3) the spatiality and temporality of living existence; and (4) the living-existing body. In addition we shall consider the meaning of the 'being-with' proper to living existence.

Third, we shall enquire into the way in which living existence is delivered over to itself in the totality of its being, i.e., *living existence in and for itself* in its 'natural' or everyday state. We are dealing here with the way in which the human has always already laid claim to itself or taken a stance vis-à-vis itself, a phenomenon that Heidegger has investigated only in its purely existential aspect. But now we wish to know: if the human is the being that has itself as an issue, i.e., that is always already concerned for its own being, and if the human is never a

pure existence but always a living existence, then in what way does the human's own apprehension of itself *as* such a living existence, its own having of itself in the entirety of its being, determine the *how* of its having-to-be-itself at each and every moment? How does a living existent matter to itself *as a living existent*, and how does this self-mattering shape the way in which it appropriates, conducts and works on itself?

Moreover, also implied in this interrogation of living existence in and for itself is *our own perspective* on this form of self-apprehension, the stance we take vis-à-vis this stance itself. For as we shall see, there are two radically different ways in which the whole of living existence can be concerned for itself, ways which we might designate, following Heidegger, as the authentic and the inauthentic. In the latter, inauthentic living existence, the human does not stray from what it is, from its essence, but it does not see this essence for what it is and choose it freely for itself; in other words, inauthentic living existence remains entirely absorbed within itself, consumed by its own nature. Authentic living existence, by contrast, has freely accepted itself and is to that extent reconciled with itself. We shall have more to say about this later on. For now let us simply remark that the goal here is to lay bare the horizon against which living existence in itself, the pure interaction of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth, can be understood in a more adequate way; in other words, the answer to this question will, it is

hoped, unveil the precise logic of this interaction. It will, moreover, reveal a certain necessary movement at its core, which in turn will lead us to reconsider the question of the essence of technology and the role of labour.

### C. The problem of the animal

Before proceeding to our first problem, being-in-the-earth in itself for us, we must first say a few words about the so-called problem of animality. When it comes to the question of animality, a curious and highly dubious either/or has always prevailed: either the human is a being unto itself, radically and essentially distinct from and therefore irreducible to the animal, which is to say that between the human and the animal there yawns an abyss of essence, or else the human is held to be, at bottom, nothing more than an animal, albeit one with certain special features and capabilities (e.g., the *λόγος*), which is to say that there is a thoroughgoing continuity between the human and the animal, animality and nothing besides, everywhere animals separated only by degrees of complexity. Such is the false dichotomy that results from the propensity to think in terms of classes of beings ('animals', 'humans') rather than modes of being (e.g., being-in-the-world, being-in-the-earth). The latter perspective allows us to reconcile these two views. For insofar as human beings and 'animals' partake of one and the same

earth by virtue of their life, the problem of 'getting inside' or 'going along with' the animal makes little sense if this is supposed to entail a leap into some wholly other mode of being. To be sure, this is not to say that there is no problem of access, but only that this problem is not one of deciphering the animal's 'life'. Rather it is a strictly *metaphysical* problem – namely, one of comprehending which entities partake of which modalities of openness and to what degree. For it seems likely enough that the so-called 'higher' animals do not dwell entirely in the life-zone, but rather that there is, grafted onto their life, a kind of proto-existence, some rudimentary comprehension of being and hence some primitive grasp of language. Is being-understanding thus capable of levels or degrees of realization? Does this point back to something like the complexity of the brain? Moreover, it would also appear that life itself admits of degrees of intensification corresponding to the developmental level of certain biological capacities (e.g., perception, motility), in which case one can imagine these two modes of being combining in any number of ways. How, then, do we define an animal metaphysically (rather than biologically)? Is an animal any living being that lacks full understanding of being? Is an elephant or an orangutan an animal in the same way as an animalcule? None of this pertains to the kind of phenomenological analysis we are aiming at here, and must therefore be set aside.

## II. Being-in-the-earth in itself for us

We begin our analysis with the problem of the way in which life as such, pure being-in-the-earth, appears to us as living existents in the role of phenomenological observers. If life is understood as a mode of in-ness or openness onto..., then it is obvious that it cannot be taken as anything like an ensemble of 'vital processes' (respiration, reproduction, growth and the like). Just as little can it be interpreted as a kind of Bergsonian 'current' passing through living beings (as so many nodes or way stations of this current), for here it is apparent that life is still understood as an object for a subject, and that the 'aliveness' of these beings is presupposed with reference to 'life' as an objective form. Life can never 'pass through' anything, nor is it ever 'passed on', and for the simple reason that life is not something 'inside' us, as it were, but rather we qua living are in life. Least of all does life have anything to do with a secret energy or force, libido, etc. But can we say anything more about life than what it is not?

### A. The intentionality of being-in-the-earth: desire

The concept of intentionality is phenomenology's most significant discovery and the guiding concern of all phenomenological enquiry in one way or another. For both Brentano and Husserl, the latter being the

first to understand it in a non-psychological sense, intentionality refers to the structural directedness of consciousness toward a meant content, irrespective of that content's factual existence or objectivity. In keeping with the Heideggerian approach we are adopting here, we can say that intentionality refers simply to the *a priori* comportmental character of the human 'being-there', its always already going out toward..., regardless of whether the object of this going-out-toward is any actual, extant entity. From this it follows that to different modalities of openness or in-ness there correspond different and commensurate forms of intentionality. As we know already, the intentional or comportmental structure of pure being-in-the-world (pure existence) has been analyzed at length by Heidegger himself. But what then about the intentionality of life?

On the basis of what we have already worked out above, we shall employ the traditional concept of *desire* (ὄρεξις) to designate the form of intentionality specific to life qua being-in-the-earth. With Husserl, we may characterize the inner structure of the intentional relation as comprising both the mode or manner of the going out, the *intentio*, and that toward which the going out is ultimately directed, the *intentum*; something is disclosed in some particular way and thus 'had', intended, in a manner that accords with the 'how' of its disclosure. We must therefore begin by asking, and more precisely: how are things disclosed to desire, i.e., in what does the desirability of the desirable consist, and

how is desire a going out toward the desirable as it is had in its desirability?

Now here it is tempting to go running straight to the tradition and to interpret the *intentio* and *intentum* with the help of all of those familiar categories by means of which life has always been understood: the former in terms of urge, drive, instinct, appetite, stimulation and the like, the latter in terms of need-fulfilment, satisfaction, pleasure and so on. Husserl himself adopts precisely this approach with his remarkably incisive and useful theory of drive- or instinct-intentionality (*Trieb- or Instinktintentionalität*). Indeed Husserl has discerned far more clearly and consistently than Heidegger the originary and constitutive life-*dimension* of the field, a kind of drive-zone that structures the world as such, and it is to Heidegger's detriment that he does not introduce some such dimension into his analytic of the human's average everydayness. For Husserl, drives are not constituted but constituting, not objects but rather *forms* of intentionality, i.e., not that toward which intentionality is directed but part of the very directedness of intentionality itself.<sup>9</sup> In

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<sup>9</sup> The following summarization of Husserl's theory of instincts is indebted to and follows closely David Smith's lucid and insightful analysis in his *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2003), 149-57. Also helpful was James Mensch's article, 'Instincts – A Husserlian Account', *Husserl Studies* 14 (1998), 219-37. Citations from

Heideggerian argot this means that drives are not themselves beings that presuppose the horizon of the world, but rather something resembling *existentialia*, elemental features of this horizon itself by virtue of which beings can emerge as such in the first place. However, drive-intentionality is not full intentionality but only a 'primal' or 'proto-intentionality' that *precedes* intentionality proper as a directedness toward 'objects', 'worldly unities', beings qua beings: 'Striving is instinctive, and instinctively – and so, at first, covertly – “directed” at what are “later” first disclosed as constituted worldly unities'. The drive-zone is thus a realm of *pre-being* (*Vorsein*); in other words, a drive is always a striving toward an affective- or 'interest-formation' (*Interessengebilde*) that is not yet an object or being, an intraworldly entity. Accordingly, because drives cannot be 'fulfilled' in the proper sense of having an object present to intuition, their fulfilment takes the form of a 'disclosure' in the sense of a satisfaction-fulfilment that results in the feeling of *pleasure*, enjoyment; an interest-formation is merely 'a datum as the content of an enjoyment while one is satisfied'. It is true, as we said above, that we do find something along these lines in the young Heidegger; several early texts evince a concern with phenomena more traditionally associated with life, e.g., urge, inclination and the like. The latter is taken up explicitly in WS 1921-2, where it is described loosely as

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Husserl's *Nachlaß* are also taken from these sources.



'a peculiar weight, a direction of gravity, a pull toward something', some particular 'factual course of maturation'.<sup>10</sup> Inclination is not just any random attraction but rather is actualized as 'proclivity', that which 'impels life into its world, rigidifies it, and brings to maturation a petrification of the directionality of life'<sup>11</sup> – in the same way, presumably, that an instinct or drive 'petrifies' the directionality of life as a fixed sort of striving. However, by WS 1929-30 Heidegger will have simply offloaded the entire problem of stimulation, urge, etc. onto the animal (in particular, onto its organs); later, the whole phenomenon will be seen as nothing more than an incarnation of the will to will and thus an expression of metaphysics.

But despite the fact that some theory of instincts has already found ample expression within phenomenology, we must reject this explanation for two important reasons. First and most immediately, if we are careful to put out of play everything accidental and extraneous and resolve to take an unbiased view of the matters themselves, we shall have to admit that we encounter in the directedness of life nothing whatsoever of instincts, drives, urges, excitations, stimulations or anything remotely of this sort. And this for a fundamental reason: the very notion of 'instinct' is inherently corrupt. It is a kind of trick used to

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<sup>10</sup> GA 61, 100f./75f.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

deflect and conceal the necessary absence of an expected *motivation*; more specifically, a fervently desired *agency* is displaced from a domain where it quite obviously cannot reside onto another, more inscrutable domain comprising dark, runic and obscure elements, forces, processes and mechanisms. Put simply, some living organism behaves *as though* it were animated by a conscious intention, wish, agenda, outlook, etc., but inasmuch as consciousness is denied *a priori* to the organism (rightly or wrongly), the wish, agenda, etc. is then clandestinely grafted onto certain *physical elements*; in other words, these latter elements (chemical, biological) are themselves now *magically endowed* with the missing consciousness; they take on the character of being-in-the-world, existence. Now 'instinct' signifies nothing other than this subtle and clever tactic of the *existentialization* of essentially non-existential phenomena; it does not describe any particular phenomenon but rather *explains away* some act or behaviour by attributing an *exclusively human character* to those things that constitute its material correlate; it is to posit a little human being at the heart of the act by lending these things the existential-phenomenal structure of an '*in order to...*', the ground and condition of possibility of which could only be an ecstatic-projective temporalization.

Consider, for example, the so-called instinct for self-preservation. Now if it happens that sexual activity has reproduction or species-continuity as one of its *consequences*, or that flight from danger has

survival as a consequence, this is in no way indicative of any instinct for self-preservation, any more than the exhaustion that results from either of these activities is governed by a secret instinct for exhaustion. It is only that we have *foisted* a certain intentional relation onto these phenomena – and in particular a relation that belongs to us and us alone. The fundamental impetus for this foisting will be sketched out in the following chapter. For now we may simply point out that the instinct for self-preservation amounts at bottom to the mobilization of a deep-seated suspicion that certain acts and gestures are meaningless unless they are supposed to originate with an attitude or stance of *concern* taken up vis-à-vis some particular *being* which we know of and refer to as ‘the self’. At the same time, comprehending full well (on some level, if not explicitly) that the condition of possibility of such a relation-to-self is our own ecstatic-projective make-up, our own existence, we bury this relation deep down in the most hidden recesses and esoteric workings of the organism, in processes whose extraordinary complexity and mysteriousness serve nicely to conceal their highly dubious freedom and the quasi-thaumaturgical act that endowed them with it. Thus it happens that a gene, molecular compound, electrical stimulus or neurotransmitter is raised to the status of a full-fledged human being, and this suffices to preserve the human character of the act and in that way to compensate for the obvious non-humanity of the organism (or in the case of the human itself, to displace

its own freedom onto something else and in that way to turn it into the freedom of another in order to flee from it). Accordingly the problem of instincts must be reformulated in such a way that the burden is shifted back onto *us* and our own existential motives. Instead of troubling ourselves with questions concerning the being, status and sphere of applicability of the instincts themselves, we must now ask: what is it about the human that drives it to impose this relation that it maintains with its own self onto the whole of the living, onto life as such? Why is the human, i.e., the only entity for whom anything like an attitudinal relation to a self-being is possible, so eager to universalize this relation, which cannot extend beyond the structural boundaries of its own existence? Why does the human's own obsessive relation with its self become the paradigm for the living of life in general – albeit (and necessarily) in the disguised form of natural 'instincts' and 'drives'?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It does not help to construe instinct in the most general sense as fixed or innate patterns of behaviour, for in this case the fixity itself presupposes the ecstatic-projective horizon of existence. Fixity means only this: that a set of acts is collected and grouped together into a *temporal series* that consciousness apprehends in the unity of a single stretch. But this fixity or regularity, while no doubt posing a problem for any science or metaphysics of life, is nowhere present in the actual living-out of desire.

The second reason we must reject the instinct theory of desire has to do with the way in which it posits – illegitimately but for fundamental reasons – a primal and ineradicable *lack* or privation at the origin of desire, and this indeed in a twofold sense that reflects the dyadic (*intentio-intentum*) structure of the intentional relation. On the one hand, the arousal or excitation of desire is due to life's being deprived of its own object, i.e., of a part of itself. The living being is restless, agitated, unstable; it can never be satisfied with anything because it never truly has anything. As Husserl says, 'the instinctive pleasure' acquired through the satisfaction of a drive 'is a process of instinctive intentions and fulfilments, and the fulfilments always leave something still open: the instinct-horizon extends further'; in this way the living being is a ceaseless 'striving forward from fulfilment to new fulfilment: each fulfilment relative, each with a horizon of unfulfilled emptiness'.<sup>13</sup> The very idea of fulfilment implies a constitutional or genetic *need* – a deprivation or 'emptiness' that can never be filled up and so provokes the most frenzied, obsessive grasping and gobbling up. This is the old Platonic image of the living being as a 'leaky jar', or what Merleau-Ponty calls in his *Nature* lectures a principle of negativity: 'We must place in the organism a principle that is either *negative* or based on *absence*. We can say of the animal that each moment of its history is

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<sup>13</sup> In Smith, op. cit., 152.

empty of what will follow, an emptiness which will be filled in later' – i.e., a *structural* 'later', a 'future larger than any future', which is only to say that the emptiness will never be filled in. 'The directing principle is neither before nor behind...[The] arising of a need would be there before that which will fill it.'<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, and for that very reason, these excitations and stimulations do not originate from within the living being itself, do not issue forth from it as its own free and creative action, but rather are *imposed* upon it from outside, i.e., from the lack itself (or the object lacked). The living being is the plaything of forces beyond its control; it is never in command of itself, has no will of its own. It is true that the concept of striving implies a certain kind of free self-propulsion and self-creation, but overall striving is assimilated to an instinctual drivenness, which always means a *being driven* to and fro by the lack. Husserl, for example, understands the very movement of life, the going *action* of instinctual drivenness, as an 'involuntary' kinaesthesia or a 'passive willing' (*Willenspassivität*), a sort of being summoned by the bare hyletic data of the senses.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Heidegger maintains that the animal's instinctual behaviour is only ever actualized through a prior disengagement or 'disinhibition' of its drives resulting from the introduction of a foreign body into its 'environment-ring'. If

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<sup>14</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.* (2003), 155f.

<sup>15</sup> In Smith, *op. cit.*, 151.

the animal's drives are not imposed upon it from outside, then by no means are they in its possession either.

But once again, if we resolve to remain as faithful as possible to the phenomenological dictum, we must confess that none of this is present to intuition, but rather and only to a *scientific* consciousness that tries to *account for* desire by supplementing it with a motive that, as before, implicates the being of the human as its condition of possibility. In short, we must say that only for a being that is *already* constituted *by* and *as* a lack, i.e., as a nothingness or nihilation, does desire come to manifest itself as lack. It is here that Sartre's theory of desire becomes relevant insofar as Sartre is concerned principally with the desire, by no means of pure life, but rather and only of the *for-itself*, or what he also calls 'human reality' (the famous 'mistranslation' of Dasein) – i.e., with a wholly worldly-existential type of desire. Strictly speaking, Sartre does not establish that desire as such is lack, but only that the human is the being whose way to be (viz., for-itself) is such that desire must assume the *form* of a lack.<sup>16</sup> Thus the question we must pose is this: what are the

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<sup>16</sup> 'Of all internal negations, the one which penetrates most deeply into being, the one which constitutes in its *being* the being concerning which it makes the denial along with the being which it denies – this negation is *lack*. This lack does not belong to the nature of the in-itself, which is all positivity. It appears in the world only with the upsurge of human

consequences for the for-itself for this structural-constitutional becoming-lack of desire? What happens when desire is *contaminated* by a lack by virtue of its contingent association with existence?

If desire signifies the being of the intentionality of life, then the concepts of drive, instinct, etc. signify only desire encumbered with necessity, *desire to which a lack has been added*. Accordingly, desire amounts to the double negation of the double lack implied in instinctual life. First, desire is not the filling up of a structural emptiness; desire does not lack its object; its object is not a lack within itself. To be sure, desire has its own 'objects', its own 'satisfactions', but these are not things absent, not deprivations. Indeed desire's objects – and by 'objects' here we mean things that are still pre-being, *Vorsein* – belong to it *a priori* as structural elements; they constitute the *intentum* of desire. Desire is not a going-out-toward in search of an object, an *intentum*, that may be there or not; on the contrary, regardless of whether the object actually presents itself, i.e., makes itself *visible* (is actually discerned or apprehended), it is nonetheless *already* there *within* desire itself.

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reality. It is only in the human world that there can be lacks.' 'Desire is a lack of being. It is haunted in its inmost being by the being of which it is desire. Thus it bears witness to the existence of lack in the being of human reality.' See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Routledge, 2003), 110, 112.



Satisfaction thus has a purely formal sense: it is nothing more than the factual attainment or achievement of that toward which desire is already pre-directed, the arriving at the 'whereto' of the 'toward' itself of the going-out. But such attainment is not a 'fulfilment'; desire does not find or attain fulfilment in its satisfaction. Rather desire just *is* the *self-fulfilment of life* as life's self-going-out-toward. Life, that is to say, is only ever 'fulfilled' in its own actual living, *in the course of* the goings-out themselves, and completely irrespective of satisfaction. As for pleasure, it is perfectly true that it can and often does accompany satisfaction, but desire as such can never be said to be *for* either the object or the associated pleasure; pleasure is entirely irrelevant to desire. Second, desire is not a being acted upon by something outside life's own control, not a being pulled, dragged or impelled by any structural or constitutional lack, not a 'passive willing' (a construction formally equivalent to 'world-poverty') or any form of involuntary servitude to forces either internal or external. The goings-out of life are not something added onto life but rather and simply the actual living-out of life, that which make life what it is. Life possesses itself, emerges from out of itself, is in full command of itself – and this not in a metaphysical but rather in a phenomenological sense. Every manifestation of desire is an instantiation of life's self-propulsion and self-actualization; moreover, it is precisely here, in the self-fulfilment of life, that we must try to discern the peculiar, unfamiliar and difficult *freedom* of life, a

freedom that can have nothing to do with sheer and absolute possibility.

How, then, shall we interpret the *intentio* and *intentum* of desire in such a way as to bypass completely the axiomatics of drive and need (lack—instinct—fulfilment)? Let us here refer to the *intentio*, again in the Aristotelian-Heideggerian sense, with the concept of *pursuit* (δίωξις). Pursuit refers specifically to the quality of the movement of desire toward the desirable; it points to the fact that this going-out-toward is never just a languid drawing near to or drifting toward, but is always something much stronger – viz., a going *after* or a going into, or in a word, a *chasing*. Pursuit therefore denotes the intensity of desire's forward motion. For this reason we may use the terms desire and pursuit interchangeably, the latter as shorthand for the former in its chasing character. It must be stressed again that desire is nothing like a mental state or affection that may or may not be accompanied by an actual chasing; it is rather that desire just *is* what is realized in the chasing or pursuing itself, irrespective of whether the chase is eventually satisfied, successful or not.

Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, pursuit also *encompasses* what we ordinarily call avoidance or *flight* (φῦγί). Thus flight is not the counterpart to pursuit, something that stands alongside and on the same level as pursuit, but rather is only a modification of pursuit. Flight, we may say, for the time being, is not a pure going after..., but a going after that *contains within it* a going away from...; it is, to use a

rather cumbersome expression, a 'going-(away-from-and-)out-toward'.

Accordingly the desirable itself, the object or *intentum* of desire (ὄρεκτόν), is the 'to-be-pursued' (διακείμενον), that which is actually pursued in the pursuit (and likewise, in the modified form of flight, the 'to-be-avoided' [ἀντικείμενον]). But how are we to think the *pursuability* of the pursued if not in terms of pleasure (or pain in the case of avoidability)? For not only is pleasure irrelevant insofar as the *intentum* is immanent to desire itself, but what is more, it would seem that the desirable could only ever manifest itself *as* pleasurable within a horizon of anticipation or potentiality, that is, in and for worldly existence (inasmuch as the pleasure or pain itself only ever arrives with 'satisfaction' proper). To pursue something *because* it is pleasurable is already to have understood it as *being* pleasurable, i.e., as a being that brings with it a future pleasure.<sup>17</sup> In fact, can we say anything

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<sup>17</sup> Thus Hume, for example, explicitly links desire as 'propensity' and 'aversion' to the *prospect* of pleasure or pain: "'Tis obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain and pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity [i.e., desire], and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction... 'Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object.' See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 266.

concerning the desirable qua pursuable over and beyond the fact that it manifests itself in some way, and intuitively, as common, suitable, fitting, agreeable or, in the most general sense, *compatible* – and therefore conversely as uncommon, unsuitable, disagreeable, *incompatible*? In this case the orectic *as* must be understood, more specifically, as an *as* of compatibility, which is simply to say that compatibility and incompatibility *as such* need not imply either being-manifestation or pleasure/pain-manifestation, that something can manifest itself *as compatible or incompatible and nothing besides*. Moreover, and to repeat, as long as they are thought from out of the actual living-out of life, compatibility and incompatibility have nothing whatsoever to do with need, deprivation, etc. *A thing is not compatible due to its being needed, necessary, lacking, etc., nor incompatible due to its failure to satisfy a need*. All we can say is that there exists something akin to a natural fitness which is immediately and intuitively grasped.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, and strictly from the point of view of phenomenal life, we can identify a kind of *pre-*

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<sup>18</sup> No doubt this fitness is understood more properly as an attunement than an affect, the latter suggesting something like a mental or psychological state. Attunement points to the quality of something within the life-zone itself; it refers essentially to the agreeableness or compatibility-character of the object. Compatibility names the quality of emergence of the *intentum*.

*established harmony* at the core of life: certain things simply and inexplicably stand in a state of immediate agreeability. Compatibility means that some things simply *belong* to desire, that desire has its own belongings (i.e., belongings which are *of life*; we are not referring to the differentiated manifold of concrete things or objects in which these belongings are factually realized or discovered).

Such a view of the intentionality of life is expressed in a similar way by Bergson through his proto-phenomenological reappropriation of the old Galenic theory of sympathies and antipathies. In *Creative Evolution* Bergson writes:

But, though instinct is not within the domain of intelligence it is not situated beyond the limits of mind. In the phenomena of feeling, in unreflecting sympathy and antipathy, we experience in ourselves – though under a much vaguer form, and one too much penetrated with intelligence – something of what must happen in the consciousness of an insect acting by instinct.<sup>19</sup>

For example:

The Ammophilia, we imagine, must learn, one by one, like the

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<sup>19</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (Mineola: Dover, 1998), 175.

entomologist, the positions of the nerve-centres of the caterpillar – must acquire at least the practical knowledge of these positions by trying the effects of its sting. But there is no need for such a view if we suppose a *sympathy* (in the etymological sense of the word) between the *Ammophilia* and its victim, which teaches it from within, so to say, concerning the vulnerability of the caterpillar. This feeling of vulnerability might owe nothing to outward perception, but result from the mere presence together of the *Ammophilia* and the caterpillar, considered no longer as two organisms, but as two activities. It would express, in a concrete form, the *relation* of the one to the other.<sup>20</sup>

Bergson, thinking life from a metaphysical standpoint, reserves the term ‘instinct’ for the form of openness (or consciousness) characteristic of non-human life, whereas ‘intellect’ refers to the openness of human life almost exclusively. Nonetheless, when he claims that ‘instinct is sympathy’, where sympathy means a kind of natural affinity or attraction to a thing, he moves squarely into the realm of phenomenal life; he is no longer describing life strictly from the perspective of matter, but is rather articulating the structure of life as a unique and autonomous form of openness (a distinction which is already blurred in

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 173f.

Bergson's thought). This natural sympathy, as a 'feeling of vulnerability' arising from the sheer co-presence of the *intentum*, is a properly phenomenological description of actually lived life; the 'relation' in Bergson's account is related to the belonging- or compatibility-character of the *intentum*.

Now it may seem strange and indeed patently false to claim, as we have, that life excludes all need and necessity, all emptiness. Surely, it will be said, if I desire, say, water, this is only because I lack water, that is, because I am thirsty. Moreover, if my thirst is not satisfied in due time, I shall certainly die. Therefore I need water, my life depends on water. But precisely here we must probe the matter as deeply and carefully as possible and enquire whether this neediness is anywhere present in *the bare going out toward the water itself* – or whether, to the contrary, it belongs only to the interpretation superimposed onto the going-out by a being that *is* in such a way as to project itself, always and already, into its own future and thus to anticipate, even if unreflectively, its own death (i.e., a being-toward-death). In this latter case we should have to say that the entire phenomenon of need is a function, *not* of life as such, but of existence (in which case Husserl's account of instinct-intentionality would be entirely valid to the degree that, like Sartre, he is interested principally in the consciousness of the living *human* being, i.e., in the contribution of 'instinct' to the formation of the ego).

## B. The earth as the zone of life

By *earth* we mean the zone or realm, the 'wherein' of life, or now, more precisely, of desire as pursuit of the compatible. Again it must be stressed that when we refer to the earth in this way we intend it in exactly the same sense in which we say of the world that it is the zone, realm, dimension, etc. of existence (the for-itself, being-in-the-world, etc.). In other words, it is not as though there were *first* an earth within or 'on' which something like life *then* came about; rather earth is simply the name for the site or the place that is opened up *by the living of life itself*. Phenomenologically speaking, *it is never the earth that engenders, conditions and sustains life, but rather life that first opens up and sustains an earth in that very self-opening*. The opening up of life *is* the event of the happening or 'earthing' of an earth.

Three elementary consequences follow from this. For one thing, and most obviously, the earth can never be mistaken for a planet, an astronomical body or any other intraworldly entity; the earth is something entirely distinct from the planet called 'Earth'. Whenever phenomenology has made an issue of the earth, it has seen this basic fact straightaway – even if it has not understood it adequately. For in fact the tendency is to assimilate the earth to the *world*, as we see, for example, in both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (as for Heidegger, although he does perceive the autonomy of the earth vis-à-vis the



world, he thinks their relation in a difficult and unsatisfactory way due to his restriction of the open to the world as the site of the disclosure of being.)<sup>21</sup> Second, the earth can never be mistaken for any of the

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<sup>21</sup> Husserl's famous '*Umsturz*' fragment is interesting in this context (see Merleau-Ponty et al., op. cit. [2002], 117-31). Husserl sees clearly that the earth is not a particular, finite body, a part of some larger whole, but rather the originary Whole that constitutes the open horizon within which every part or whole-of-parts can emerge as such in the first place; the earth *engulfs*, as Merleau-Ponty says. And yet this engulfing horizon is, at bottom, nothing more than the world itself in its quality of ontological fixity and stability: the earth is the '*Erdboden*', the immobile and immovable 'ark', which is to say, the ἀρχή, the origin, constant centre; it is the absolute non-motion that makes all ontic motion and rest possible. And this in a twofold sense: on the one hand, as the realm of free possibility, the 'open infinity of the earthly world as endowed with an infinity of possibly existing bodies' (127), and on the other hand, as the 'primordial home' of a 'universal humanity', the scene of 'a single primordial history' of which all relative histories would be mere episodes (126f.). Likewise, in his course notes on Husserl's fragment, Merleau-Ponty describes the *Erdboden* as the primal '*Umwelt, Offenheit, prerepresentational – horizon*', the 'horizon of horizons' (67f.) that 'assures every possibility of Being' (74) and thereby constitutes the

particular intraworldly-planetary entities with which the earth is most commonly associated. Thus the earth is not the land, trees, rivers, hills, grass, wind, etc., although the earth may, and indeed must, find expression through these and the like. Third, just as there can never be any happening or opening up of a world for beings whose way to be is not that of existence, so too there can never be any happening of an earth for beings that are not in the way or mode of life – and this includes not only such non-living entities as stones but, importantly, what we might call *pure existences*, i.e., pure beings-in-the-world (the subject matter of *Being and Time*). To be sure, such pure existences may perceive something like ‘nature’, but always in a wholly intraworldly way, as the ‘natural world’, and without ever discovering the earth thereby, in other words, without ever experiencing anything like desiring-pursuit (in ‘scenery’, for example, there is no trace of earth

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ultimate matter of philosophy. This *Umwelt* is the *Sinnesboden* and *Erfahrungsboden*, the ground of both sense and experience, the ‘foundation of the unity of history’ (68), something structured and yet entirely pre-thematic, pre-logical, a ‘coherence without concepts’ (159). All of this, of course, has virtually nothing to do with what we associate with the idea of ‘earth’ in an average everyday way, i.e., with what we ourselves, as earth-living beings, intuit of the earth *in the midst of which* we actually live.

whatsoever).

We may examine the earth from either of two distinct angles depending on whether we have the *intentio* or the *intentum* – pursuit or compatibility – principally in view. Let us begin with the latter angle. From the viewpoint of the *intentum*, the earth is, first and foremost, the wherein of the appearing and disappearing – i.e., the becoming-visible and becoming-invisible – of the compatible, that from out of which the compatible emerges and reveals itself and that into which it retreats and conceals itself. In line with this we might perhaps wish to add that the earth exudes a certain aura of ‘temptation’. To be sure, this does not imply that the earth forces the pursuit in the sense in which a stimulus is thought to disengage or ‘disinhibit’ a drive; it is never that the earth drags desire into the chase in some crudely deterministic fashion. It only suggests that we can discern, as nothing more than the structural counterpart to desire’s own self-propulsion, a kind of stirring or ‘solicitation’ by which desire is awakened to itself, takes possession of itself – and hence knows itself in the desirable itself, in that which is given to it as according with its own nature. Temptation, in a word, denotes something like an *invitation* to pursue.

Second, the earth is the wherein of the appearing and disappearing of incompatibles, or what we might also, and more precisely, refer to as *provocations*, these being not objects of pursuit so much as obstacles, challenges or problems to be solved or negotiated. Here the earth is a

field of spontaneous irruption and intervention, i.e., of the erecting and throwing out of barriers and pitfalls in the path of pursuit that thwart its trajectory and channel its movement in new and unforeseen directions; in this way factual attainment of the compatible is deferred and delayed by new requirements of scrutiny, penetration, extraction, traversal, avoidance, circumnavigation, conflict, etc. (This brings us to a more precise understanding of the meaning of flight, i.e., as a particular mode of negotiation: 'going away from...', retreat, etc. is only one of innumerable strategies for dealing with incompatibles.<sup>22</sup>) Accordingly, such provocation, disruption, negotiation, etc. are by no means evidence of the essential 'passivity' of life, nor do these indicate any sort of imperfection. Provocation is only the turning or cutting off of an ongoing pursuit, or the instigation of a new pursuit, by which the living being engages in a free response; for life, every pursuit is something affirmative and results in a positive solution or satisfaction.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In short, compatibles are pursued, incompatibles are negotiated, and this negotiation can occur in several different ways, one of which is flight. Strictly speaking, flight is a kind of pursuit which entails the unity of negotiation and pursuit: a single movement is simultaneously (1) a chasing after a compatible, e.g., 'shelter', 'safety', etc. (pursuit), and (2) an avoidance of an incompatible or provocation (negotiation).

<sup>23</sup> It is precisely this provocative, agonistic, irruptive character of the

Whether a compatible or incompatible is visible or invisible has no bearing on the fact that it is always *there* as the correlate of the desire (the ὀρεκτόν), for it is obvious that the condition of possibility of a compatible's invisibility is its *already* being given as compatible, its belonging to the pursuit that pursues it. An invisible compatible is nothing more or less than a compatible that is already being approached or pursued as desirable but has not yet been sighted.

As for the former angle, the properties of which correspond to the *intentio*, the actual going out of desire, we may characterize the earth's

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earth that is most often linked to the purported 'instinct for self-preservation' common to life, i.e., with the urge to 'survival'. But in addition to the fact that life, as we said above, has no knowledge of or concern with either 'selves' or their temporal perpetuation, it must also be stressed that such things as provocations, obstructions and the like are in no way *threats* to life but rather, and just the opposite, part and parcel of the very substance of life. If life is 'preserved', it is *not* in 'surviving' the earth's assaults and challenges but rather and precisely in *encountering* and '*en-during*' them, in living *through* them (as a going out to meet them), *within* the duration of the provocations themselves, whatever their factual outcome. Life is not what is left over after some provocation has been evaded or neutralized; rather it is the provocations themselves that *get lived*.

revealing and concealing of compatibles and provocations as so many *coefficients of pursuit* in the sense that all of these directly affect the quality or intensity of the pursuit. Hence we must imagine the earth as a kind of *aether* through which pursuit must always pass in the course of its going out. This passing through always occurs with more or less ease, grace, fluidity, agility, freedom of motility, etc., according as the aether assumes a greater or lesser density or rarefaction. At one extreme, the earth delivers up its contents freely, erects no barriers between pursuit and its satisfaction; at the other end, it enfolds its contents deep within it and unleashes a slew of barriers and obstacles to stymie and frustrate pursuit. Thus the intensity of the pursuit waxes and wanes with the relative intractability and recalcitrance of the earth – the earth, too, has its moods, so to speak. To be clear, this density and rarefaction are nothing merely ontic, i.e., calculable; it has nothing to do with any actual, material cluttering, hardening, loosening up, clearing away, etc., but only with the relative degree of refractoriness of the medium itself through which desire must always travel. In this respect the ontically thickest jungle can be the airiest place of all, while conversely the ontically sparsest and most barren wasteland can be virtually impenetrable.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> It goes without saying that the particular (ontic) compatibles and incompatibles are variable and contingent, hence irrelevant. Light and

On this basis we can perhaps begin to think the phenomena of vitality and fatigue in a more ordinary way. Phenomenologically considered, these have nothing at all to do with the organism's various metabolic or biochemical states or processes. What we call 'vitality' is simply the unrestricted, uninhibited flow of pursuit, the lightness and buoyancy of the absolute freedom of the chase: the earth does not hinder or obstruct, but rather seems to carve out and lay before the living-pursuing being the course of pursuit itself. Its antithesis, fatigue, is accordingly simply a process of 'devitalization', a sluggishness and torpor commensurate with the earth's densification, contraction, withdrawal, concealment.

We may sum up our brief discussion of the earth by suggesting that we interpret the earth most generally as the *arena* of life in the literal sense, i.e., as the site of a primal strife or agon that is less an outright battle than a kind of game or spectacle, or perhaps even better, an '*Auseinandersetzung*', a contest or debate, in Goldstein's sense. The earth is something like the space within which life is 'played out', as it were, a

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dark can facilitate pursuit or cripple it, depending on the constitution of the living being itself. But insofar as they do either one, they are *of the earth*. Light, for example, phenomenologically speaking, is not of the sun, and even less is it some abstractly conceived physical state or effect.

space that is itself an active contestant in this very playing. Yet we cannot take this image of the *Auseinandersetzung* all the way, for in Goldstein's usage it implies something that, from our point of view, is not unproblematic. As Canguilhem writes, commenting on Goldstein:

The relation between the living being and the milieu establishes itself as a debate (*Auseinandersetzung*), to which the living brings its own proper norms of appreciating situations, both dominating the milieu and accommodating itself to it. This relation does not essentially consist (as one might think) in a struggle, in an opposition. That applies to the pathological state. A life that affirms itself against the milieu is a life already threatened.<sup>25</sup>

For Goldstein, for the living being to struggle with its 'milieu' is a genuine possibility, and this struggling indicates a situation of desperation. But the earth is precisely not a milieu – not an environment as a domain of beings to which the living being is always striving to accommodate and adapt itself in an attempt to preserve itself. In other words, from our perspective there can never be any antagonism or hostile opposition *between* life and the earth, for even if life entails, as it

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<sup>25</sup> Georges Canguilhem, Stefanos Geroulanos (tr.), Daniela Ginsburg (tr.), *Knowledge of Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 113.



no doubt does, a series of struggles and conflicts, often violent, these always and necessarily belong intrinsically to the very *living* of life, to life's own self-actualization. In other words, life's struggling with the earth is precisely what realizes the earth *as an earth*; it is already constitutive of the very earthing of the earth, of its *being-earth*.

### C. The spatiality and temporality of being-in-the-earth

It is clear that the spatiality of life, like that of existence, is a thick, contextual spatiality; it is also clear that, in and of itself, it can have nothing to do with world-space inasmuch as the latter is grounded in being-understanding and thus has essentially to do with the distribution of beings within regions in ways that are more or less geared toward the human's accomplishment of its sundry projects and tasks. On the basis of what we have already established, we should have to say that life-space is necessarily organized in accordance with the earth's revealing and concealing of compatibles and throwing out of provocations and disruptions.

More specifically, we may say that the space of life is divided up, not into regions where things find their natural and proper place within a totality and are in that way made easily accessible, but into what we might call *sectors of relative affinity*. This phrase signifies that the quality of natural compatibility, fitness, agreeability, etc. that accrues to

particular objects transfers onto the surroundings wherein these objects are either immediately given or else somehow discerned, which is to say, out of which they are likely to arise and into which they are likely to retreat. *Relative* affinity points to the fact that both the compatible objects and the sectors possess a degree of *intensity* that corresponds to the objects' accessibility or procurability. This is to say that compatibility is always variable insofar as it is affected or conditioned by accessibility: both objects and sectors grow more or less compatible (therefore more or less intense) to the degree that they become more or less accessible.

Now this variability of accessibility/compatibility is nothing more than *distance* in the most phenomenologically rigorous sense. Distance is always given in terms of the degree of intensity of the compatibility or incompatibility of the object, and as such is always correlated with the density of the medium and the vitality of the pursuit. Accordingly the affinity-sectors of earthly space are doubly variable: not only does their relative nearness or farness change with the relative degree of felt immediacy (visibility, invisibility, difficulty of procurement) of compatibles and provocations, but in addition the sectors themselves can appear, disappear and transform themselves more or less spontaneously and unpredictably. The space of being-in-the-earth is always wildly unstable and treacherous. What this means is that we must envision a completely separate and highly dynamic *phenomenal*

geography that has only a tenuous connection with natural, ontic geography. For life is never oriented by and within fixed, stable physical features and domains; to the contrary, the phenomenal topography is characterized by a chaotic stretching, warping and transmogrification, a constant and random elongating and contracting (think, for example, of how the sudden emergence of a provocation such as a swarm of angry wasps causes an instantaneous polarization of the field into sectors of relative danger and safety, a polarization which just as rapidly and completely dissipates with the passing of the provocation).

The temporality of pure being-in-the-earth, on the other hand, is a more difficult matter, for if there were some sort of pure life-time, it most certainly could not be anything like the ecstatic projection that constitutes the opening up of our own being-in-the-world. But nor could it be something like pure Bergsonian *durée*, for even while this is supposed to characterize the time of matter as such, and therefore of life understood from the perspective of the creative self-organization of matter, nevertheless duration must always be distinguished from the time of perception or consciousness, which necessarily involves a stabilizing slowing-down or contracting of the temporal flow into unities or objects that can be acted upon. If we suppose, as we have been, that life is realized in the sheer living-through of pursuit, then this implies an absorption in the pursuit itself, the pure presence of the now.

Does the pure now suffice to constitute something like 'time'? For the moment let us simply concede, with Heidegger, that it must remain a problem whether and in what sense pure or 'mere' life could be constituted by a kind of time.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> GA 2, 457/396: 'It remains a problem in itself to define ontologically the way in which the senses can be *stimulated* or *touched* in the merely-living, and how and where the being of animals, for instance, is constituted by some kind of "time".' The problem comes down to this: if life does not have being qua being, and if the horizon of being-understanding is precisely time, then it follows either that life as such is atemporal, or else that there exists some other kind of 'time' that is not constituted by the sort of before-after structure that arises on the basis of ecstatic projection – an apparently nonsensical prospect.

As for the spatiality of life, one might perhaps object that in certain cases a kind of spatial fixity does in fact endure – for example, the den, the nest, a river, a life-mate, etc., all constitute stable and therefore constantly accessible compatibles that accordingly draw or weave around them equally stable sectors of affinity, ground-points in the turbulent flux of earth-space. For one thing, however, this is a highly volatile and precarious stability, one that can be shattered at any moment by earthly provocations of greater or lesser force that send life scattering in all directions; life never holds on to its compatibles for very

#### D. The lived body

It goes without saying that the body must be understood as that which actually gets lived; life is nothing mental, but rather and always a living-the-body. Desire does not well up from inside an otherwise inert body-thing, but is rather the very *bodying-forth* of the body in life: it is the body itself that is solicited by the compatible, that stirs itself to action, that gives chase, that is challenged and provoked by incompatibles and that negotiates and solves them (or fails to solve them) in a way that accords with the manner of their emergence. In this way the body constitutes a kind of recording surface, an illustrated history of life, a palimpsest revealing layer upon layer of traces of earthly incursions and assaults. This image of the palimpsest is intended quite literally: the marks, crevices, wrinkles, lesions, scars and ruptures that spread out over the surface of the body are the very writing of the earth; they constitute a geoglyphic account of the earth's activity, an archive of the living-out of a life in the most authentic sense of a constant struggling and striving with the earth.

It follows from this that the immediate agreeability or pre-

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long. Moreover, and even more problematically, in what would the fixity- or stability-*character* of such ground-points consist if not a certain *temporalization*, i.e., a kind of *expectation*, an anticipatory projection?

established harmony that constitutes the compatibility of the compatible also translates to a certain natural fitness on the part of the body; in other words, if an object is a compatible-object, it is such precisely because it accords somehow with the body, with its figure, structure, functions, possible movements. There is a kind of ontological measure, correspondence or commensurability holding between bodily pursuit and the earth's revealing, concealing and provoking (phenomenologically, form and function are equiprimordial). Put slightly differently, we can say that each of these, the body and the earth, finds its *essential limit* in the other: on the one hand, the living body pursues only in such a way as to leave open the possibility of further intervention on the part of the earth; on the other, the earth only ever withdraws compatibles or wields provocations in such a way that the body is granted further pursuit as counter-provocation. The body and the earth thus hold each other in the balance of a constant and necessary tension; neither gives or takes more than the other can handle. Immediately it will be objected that inasmuch as the living being perishes, the earth must in fact breach this balance, must eventually provoke in a way that negates life altogether, that strips the body of its ability to respond. But already this is to step outside of the sheer living of life and to reduce earthly life to a contest between two intraworldly things present at hand (life as a state or process, the earth as an environment, etc.), i.e., to think life from the perspective of existence. But with respect to being-in-the-earth itself, all

we can say is that the body is always sufficiently equipped to deal with the earth in whatever way it reveals, conceals, assails, provokes, obstructs, disrupts, etc.

Like the earth, then, the body itself is carved up into sectors of affinity. Ontically speaking, the arrangement of these sectors determines certain universal properties that hold true for all similarly structured bodies; in other words, the body is always the particular body that it is by virtue of its own unique capacities for encountering and engaging the earth. A living being that had no intrinsic power of locomotion could never be solicited in such a way that it should have to crawl or scurry about in search of food or safety; for such a being the earth could never hold out 'things-that-must-be-crawled-toward' *as compatibles*, nor could the earth ever provoke it in ways that demand crawling and the like. Cliffs and treetops do not manifest themselves as shelter for beings that cannot fly or climb.

It is well known that Heideggerian philosophy has no satisfactory way of comprehending the phenomenon of the body. To cite but one example of the awkwardness with which Heidegger treats the body: in a conversation with the psychologist Medard Boss in 1963, Heidegger makes the following remark:

1. The phenomena of the body cannot be dealt with without a sufficient elaboration of the fundamentals of existential being-in-

the-world.

2. So far a sufficiently useful description of the phenomenon of the body has not emerged, that is, one viewed from the perspective of the being-in-the-world.<sup>27</sup>

Now from our point of view, this apparently insurmountable vexation at the enigma of the body is attributable, at least in part, to this central confusion: that Heidegger recognizes, and can recognize, *only* the possibility of the *existential* body, that is, the body 'viewed from the perspective of being-in-the-world' exclusively. In other words, what Heidegger really puzzles over is the *living* body – the desiring, pursuing, negotiating body, the body of being-in-the-earth – but he has no means of thinking this inasmuch as he lacks a notion of life as something coeval and equiprimordial with existence. This is also what allows him – wrongly, but in a way that conforms to the general thrust of his thinking – to place such disproportionate emphasis and value on the human body. Indeed, if the body can only be thought adequately on the basis of pure existence, and if plants and animals are manifestly not existents, then it is not clear whether or in what sense living beings can have bodies at all. In his *Parmenides* lectures (WS 1942-3) Heidegger writes:

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<sup>27</sup> ZS, 157.



The hand exists as hand only where there is disclosure and concealment. No animal has a hand, and a hand never originates from a paw or a claw or a talon. Even the hand of one in desperation (it least of all) is never a talon, with which a person clutches wildly...Man does not 'have' hands, but the hand holds the essence of man.<sup>28</sup>

The hand, thought from the viewpoint of being-in-the-world, is clearly body, and body precisely to the extent that it is thought as such. But are claw, talon and paw not also body? Do they not belong to living beings as parts of their living bodies? In the same way, does the human not also live? Does it not thereby body-forth in a living way, i.e., with a living body? It is easy to see that the happy, comfortable division between 'man' and 'the animals' is pure fiction; nevertheless, as we have said, it would be a mistake to rush headlong back into the opposite dogma that the human is nothing but a higher animal. It is perfectly true to say that the human does not have paws or talons, just as dogs and eagles do not have hands. Only a being that exists in the fullest and most complete sense can have a hand as opposed to any mere grasping-and-clutching appendage. And yet, insofar as it lives, the human unquestionably has the *structural equivalent* of talon, beak, hoof, etc., given that all of these are operative in precisely the same sense in desire,

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<sup>28</sup> GA 54, 118f./80.

i.e., insofar as they are considered *ontologically*, as grounded in the being of life qua being-in-the-earth. True, only a hand can be extended in a desperate appeal for help or a humble gesture of thanks, for the human alone among beings is capable of such meaning-bestowing acts as appealing and thanking. But when a human being 'clutches wildly' to shield itself from imminent attack or sprints to the safety of shelter, its hands and legs function in exactly the same way in which they do for every other living creature similarly endowed. That to the human body an existential function accrues does not thereby automatically negate its co-originary vital function.

#### E. The life-phenomenology of Barbaras

We may draw our discussion of pure life or being-in-the-earth as such to a close by contrasting our findings with those of Renaud Barbaras, who has perhaps gone further than anyone in the direction of a rigorous life-phenomenology and who also thinks the meaning of life essentially in terms of desire. Briefly, we may point to three general and somewhat fundamental divergences between our respective positions.

First, Barbaras does not agree or acknowledge that life is the opening up of its own distinct life-zone; in other words, Barbaras does not recognize the earth as a zone explicitly and essentially counterposed to the world. For Barbaras, whose work is grounded more in the

phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Patočka than Heidegger, the world is everything, the open as such: 'The *World* is that to which life relates and that at which life is aimed, while it remains, however, unrepresentable.' Nor can it be said that by world Barbaras means essentially what we mean by earth, for Barbaras interprets the world very generally as 'the common element into which beings plunge', 'a non-totalizable totality or a container that gives capacity, that is, consistency, to all it contains'.<sup>29</sup>

Second, and consequently, Barbaras thinks in terms of a single, unified spectrum of openness that admits of a range of degrees of complexity. There is only and everywhere life in its myriad forms, which are in each case either higher or lower than the others, and the human form is of course the highest of all.<sup>30</sup> Now from our point of view this is the very same predicament that Heidegger finds himself in insofar as his theme is pure existence. For if you posit only a single, homogeneous form or sphere of openness, then from the moment you introduce a second form you are immediately compelled to assimilate or subordinate one form to the other by treating it as ontologically

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<sup>29</sup> Barbaras, op. cit. (2008), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 8: '[An] adequate determination of life must also be able to account for its highest forms and, notably, for the dimension of knowledge peculiar to the human order.'

dependent or 'privative'. Thus, whereas Heidegger privileges existence over life and thereby reduces the latter to the former, Barbaras simply reverses this operation, negating the problem in a way that does not quite succeed in overcoming it:

Unlike Heidegger...who thinks life in terms of existence, I am suggesting that we think existence in terms of life. It follows that human existence must be understood from vital existence; and if it is agreed that humanity is not life plus something but only a new dimension of life, then an 'additive' anthropology must replace the privative zoology. In short, I am suggesting that the condition for the possibility of perception lies in the vital mode of existing.<sup>31</sup>

For Barbaras, existence is a mode of the vital, i.e., the mode of the highest form of life, and not vice versa. But whereas Barbaras is perfectly aware of the contradictions inherent in the Heideggerian approach, he does not seem to see that merely inverting this position only correspondingly inverts, but by no means solves, these contradictions. For in truth it matters little which form one elevates as primary; it is the whole one-dimensional model itself that is

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<sup>31</sup> Barbaras, 'Life and Perceptual Intentionality', *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003), 161.

problematic. If Heidegger, privileging existence, is led to reduce life to an intraworldly determination and thereby to deny genuinely primordial human life, then Barbaras, privileging life, ends up conceding Heidegger's point insofar as this life is only first recognized as such qua existence, i.e., as a self-interpretation of existence in terms of life. It is not unlikely that Heidegger would agree that the existential may be thought from out of the vital, but *only ever from out of the existential itself* as that within which all understanding is ultimately grounded and which is therefore necessarily prior. Beyond this there is the metaphysical problem as to what existence actually means in this context such that it can be taken simply as a higher form of life (precisely *what* in or of life must become higher in order to constitute existence or existential life, or better, how can the meaning of existence be recast in terms of an enhancement or augmentation of life?) as well as to how an evolution of life into existence, as of something lower into something higher, is actually achieved.

For us, the difficulty with Barbaras's approach comes to a head with the problem of the animal, where we are once again forced into the straitjacket of the familiar either/or: *either* one adopts a kind of phenomenological monism, affirms the essential unity of life and therefore the inner continuity between the human pole and the animal pole, *or* one falls back into a crude onto-phenomenological dualism that reduces life to a mere object (e.g., a set of biological or physico-chemical

processes) for a consciousness understood as a pure immanence and thereby carves out an insurmountable schism or 'abyss' between matter and mind, instinct and intellect, animal and man, etc. In short, either absolute continuity or absolute discontinuity. Now it is clear on which side life-phenomenology must fall: affirmation of discontinuity is tantamount, *a priori*, to a rejection of true, living life: 'Ontological dualism cannot be separated from the failure to recognize the phenomenon of life insofar as it is essentially unitary'. Accordingly, any life-phenomenology 'that intends to think the genuine unity of life must grasp it in its effective continuity, as that from which animal as well as man arises. The unity of life as such must overcome the distinction between animal and human.'<sup>32</sup> But we wonder whether this position is not in fact the necessary outcome of a certain theoretical posture, perhaps even the expression of a well-meaning desire to see humanity and animality reconciled once and for all. Do we really wish to deny that existence constitutes something entirely unique *in kind*? In any case, we maintain, as we have shown above, that it is possible to affirm both of these positions – the 'unity of life as such' and 'the distinction between animal and human' – at once, without thereby falling into contradiction.

Third and finally, there is the problem with which we began: viz.,

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<sup>32</sup> Barbaras, *op. cit.* (2008), 8.

that of the place of lack, absence or negation in life. Barbaras is adamant that life cannot be interpreted as a set of coterminous ontic lacks, discrete circuits of need and need-fulfilment, since this would be to subordinate life entirely to a logic of self-preservation that is nowhere to be found in lived life itself and that comprehends life essentially in terms of death.<sup>33</sup> Life is never a mere staying alive (this is the crux of his critique of Jonas) – in this we fully agree. However, this forceful and consistent denial of ontic lack is carried out only in order to facilitate the re-inscription, at a much deeper, structural level, of an essential, *ontological* lack residing at the very core of life itself. In exactly the same way that Husserl characterizes life as a ‘horizon of unfulfilled emptiness’ and Merleau-Ponty attributes to life an *a priori* neediness, ‘a lack which is not a lack of this or that’,<sup>34</sup> Barbaras discovers ‘a fundamental incompleteness at the heart of the living being’, a radical ‘insatiability’ such that ‘nothing appeases its vital tension, as if any realization were at the same time a failure and as if any point of arrival were at the same time a point of departure’. This insatiability or

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 10: ‘If life is thought on the basis of the living being, as the act of the satisfaction of needs that enables the living being to stay alive, it is because life is approached in terms of what denies it, that is, it is approached in terms of death.’

<sup>34</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.* (2003), 155.

incompleteness 'is not that of a lack that could be filled in, as the classic conception of life would have it', but rather a congenital dissatisfaction, 'an absence that cannot be filled in'. For Barbaras, this dissatisfaction constitutes 'the very definition of the living being' and therefore the most proper sense of desire as the essence of life.<sup>35</sup> Desire is not the satisfaction of needs but a necessary unsatisfactoriness, a radical 'experience of dispossession'.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Barbaras's conception of desire is formally identical to that of (for example) Levinas. In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas writes that 'the difference between need and Desire' is that 'in need I can sink my teeth into the real and satisfy myself in assimilating the other; in Desire there is no sinking one's teeth into being, no satiety, but an uncharted future before me.'<sup>37</sup> Every particular need, every ontic lack, at least contains the possibility of satisfaction, which is never the case for desire. Thus, for Levinas, 'need already rests on Desire', which is exactly the position of Barbaras: 'It is because of and in view of this insatiable mobility that the living being must satisfy its needs, and this is why those needs are, in reality, subordinate to desire'. In this way, and somewhat ironically, Barbaras ends up defining

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<sup>35</sup> Barbaras, op. cit. (2008), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, Alphonso Lingis (tr.), *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 117.



life in precisely the same terms as Heidegger: inasmuch as life is thought 'existentially', i.e., as a being-in-the-world, it follows that what desire is dispossessed of is simply the world itself. It is the world that life lacks, that is perpetually absencing itself, that is always still other: 'It is insofar as life is from the start in touch with a world that only presents itself in the mode of absence that life can be described as Desire.'<sup>38</sup> The world is the always 'unpresentable': 'Life's insatiability correlates with the world's inescapable withdrawal.' In a word, life is *Weltarmut*, world-poverty – we have come back round to WS 1929-30.

Now it is easy to see that this only exacerbates the problem of continuity mentioned above, for if human existence is thought on the basis of life, as a higher form of life, then it becomes extremely difficult to understand how a mode of being (viz., existence) that is characterized precisely by its having, building or forming of world, its richness of world, could come about as the *result* or the effect of a process of augmentation or intensification of another mode (viz., life) whose essence is world-absence or world-withdrawal. But beyond this, Levinas's formulation ('...an uncharted future before me...') draws attention to the real dilemma here: viz., can a structural dissatisfaction be posited, phenomenally speaking, outside of a horizon of futurity? Does not dissatisfaction as such necessarily imply something like

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<sup>38</sup> Barbaras, op. cit. (2008), 15f.

projection onto future satisfactions? And in this case, would we not be forced to conclude that this dissatisfaction is nowhere present in the sheer living-through of life itself but rather only one possible interpretation of life by and for an entity that is 'ek-statically' projective in its very constitution? From the mere fact of life's pursuit of what is compatible with it, can we infer anything like a constitutional dissatisfaction or insatiability? I do not see how we can. Rather it seems that this sort of continued appeal to and reliance on an axiomatics of emptiness, dissatisfaction and the like stems in large measure from a tenacious fascination – indeed one that continues to grip all of us today, and perhaps for essential reasons – with the concept, or perhaps 'non-concept', at once infinitely pregnant and perfectly vacuous, of an invisible, unnameable and ceaselessly productive lack, i.e., the apophatic and quasi-theological lack of 'differance' in the classic deconstructive sense, as well as, perhaps, from a certain project of squaring life with a de rigueur ontology of multiplicity and becoming. For this is an image of life that is by now reassuringly familiar and increasingly quaint: life as a structural inability to attain permanent presence; desire as a movement of perpetual self-creation, 'ad-venture', self-going-out-beyond..., fueled by absence, difference; the realm of life as an untotalizable totality – and so forth. But it seems to me that these notions tell us far less about life as such than about our own unflagging fidelity to a certain *style* of philosophizing whose power and popularity

remain to be accounted for *historically*. We must avoid the constant temptation to read back into life what we feel we *ought* to find there, inasmuch as the task of a *phenomenology* of life demands that we stay as close to the things themselves as possible.

### III. Living existence in itself for us

We now proceed to the second of our three tasks: analysis of the totality of human living existence in its pure state, i.e., as the full phenomenon of living existence appears to us as scientific observers and not living existence itself in the natural attitude (i.e., for itself). In many ways this is the most difficult task, given the intricacy and complexity of our knowledge of pure existence as such. The possibility that is held out before us here is that of a more complete philosophical anthropology, one in which every '*existentiale*', every structural feature of the human way to be that is grounded in the human's ecstatic-projective constitution, is interpreted in its *essential complication* with desire. Again, it cannot be stressed enough that this 'complication' has nothing to do with any relation of succession, especially a causal one. It means only that the human way to be is distinguished by the co-presence (or co-'devolving') of the two equiprimordial zones of world and earth, or, that the human's 'field' or 'there' is always and originally a two-dimensional one. Thus under no circumstances would the goal of a

philosophical anthropology be to 'explain' the *existentialia* away by showing how they are dependent on certain underlying forces, drives, urges and the like. It is rather to show how, insofar as desire is thought as pursuit of compatibles or belongings, the existential structures themselves begin to exhibit a certain order and regularity which becomes completely invisible whenever only *pure* existence is at issue.

Let us get clearer on this key point. We know that the world exhibits a radical indeterminacy with respect to its ontical content (as opposed to the universality of its ontological structures). For one thing, the sundry beings that comprise the realm of immediate circumspective concern of a particular individual are given in manifold ways that accord with that individual's unique factual-historical situation. Moreover, insofar as the human just *is* an ecstatic-projective temporalizing, the pure world is always given to it as an open horizon of possibilities all of which point back to its own structural-constitutional potentiality-for-being.<sup>39</sup> But if the human is a *living* existent and consequently resides not in a pure world but rather and always in a world-*earth*, then how does life qua desiring-pursuit serve to modify or

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<sup>39</sup> Thus Heidegger remarks that what we 'explicitly and firstly attend to or even apprehend and observe in the equipmental contexture which in the given instance surrounds us most closely is not determinable but always optional and variable within certain limits' (GA 24, 233/164).

transform this pure possibility-character of the pure world of pure existence? Life, as we shall see clearly, *introduces a degree of universal ontical content into existence and thereby into the world itself*. Life organizes, shapes and delimits the *existentialia*, reining in the manifold ways in which they are able to function, and this very reining in and delimiting is itself an *ontological* feature of living existence. Accordingly – and this is simply to say the same thing in a different way – life contracts the ontical fluidity and flexibility of the pure world into more or less regular and stable figures, shrinks the indeterminability and variability of beings down to the concreteness of a point. I meet a stranger from a distant land, and though I know nothing of his language, customs or habits, I can be sure that he will desire food if he is hungry, a place to rest if he is tired, shelter and warmth if it is cold outside, etc. These *beings* – food, shelter and the like – possess, on a certain level, an ontical fixity that finds its ontological ground in desire. But this is equally and conversely to say that life introduces an entirely new and unforeseen form of flexibility and variability *into existence itself*. That is, the *existentialia* themselves can be seen to exhibit an *ontological* variability that can be neither discerned nor understood from the point of view of pure existence. These structures possess a certain ‘volume’, as it were; they expand and contract according to the degree of their complicity with life. To investigate living existence in itself means to explore the manifold forms of this ontico-ontological expanding and contracting of

the world. In what follows we shall provide a working outline of how such an investigation might proceed.

#### A. The intentionality of living existence

We know that the intentionality of existence is characterized by a having or going out toward beings – a comportment in the strict sense – the ultimate target of which is always the being of the individual ‘being-there’ itself. For Heidegger, the most general term for this fundamental characteristic of the human, its always having something to do with beings for the sake of itself, is *concern* (*Sorge*). At the same time, we have defined the intentionality of life as desire in the sense of pursuit of the compatible. The first problem, then, is to understand the nature of the unity of desire and comportment as the most complete sense of the intentionality of the whole of living existence.

Now it is never the case that the human jumps back and forth from life to existence, such that here it desires, there it comports, alternating between these two according to whichever zone it presently inhabits. The human is not distinguished by the fact that it does *both* of these – as though, in addition to desiring, the human also engaged in some comporting – as if they could be ranged alongside each other. The human never, except perhaps under the most extreme conditions, experiences *pure* desire. But just as little is it the case that every

comportment conceals within it an element of desire, as though they had fused together to form a single, entirely novel form of intentionality. Not all concern implies a relation to desire; clearly there are purely existential comportments. Rather we must say that the various forms of desire (which forms we might identify in a commonsense way by appealing to the nature of the compatible-object itself – e.g., the alimentary-object, the water-object, the shelter-object, etc.) constitute so many poles or *axes* around which concern is always oriented more or less. These axes ‘ab-sorb’ worldly potentialities at a rate directly proportionate to the intensity of the desire. Like stars that draw lesser bodies into their gravitational fields, axes of concern exert an attraction effect that results in a relative constriction of comportment: the more one approaches the axes themselves, the closer one gets to absolute desiring-pursuit, i.e., to a total absence of comportmental or interpretative possibility. Conversely, the more one pulls away from the axes, the more do the possibilities of concern radiate outward in so many new and unforeseeable directions. Furthermore, there are no interstices between these force fields, no vacuums; the world-earth is completely saturated. In this way living existence can be described as a perpetual migration from one desire-field to the next, each sojourn occurring at a greater or lesser distance from the axis of that particular field, which distance determines the range of concerned activity available to the living existent at that particular time. Simply put, if it is

true enough that the human, qua existent, qua being-for-itself, is a radical potentiality-for-being, we must nevertheless admit that, insofar as it also and essentially lives, its potentiality is always subject to a ceaseless swelling and shrinking according to its relative position within a given force field of pursuit.

Let us clarify this point a bit. What we have just said can mean one of two things depending on whether we have the *intentio* or the *intentum* principally in view. As for the *intentum*, it means that the nearer the human draws to some axis of concern, the more does the intended object come to manifest itself *as* a *compatible-being*. This is a contradictory formulation that points to the singular and internally antagonistic make-up of living existence as such. It signifies a drawing together of the orectic *as* and the hermeneutic *as*, such that the object remains a being *even while* its halo of significance (i.e., the scope of its possible 'whatness', its *essentia*) is increasingly curtailed with the human's growing proximity to life, to the axis. For example, when I am totally devoid of thirst, water, as a being, may appear to me in any number of modalities: as equipment for doing and making, as the molecular compound 'H<sub>2</sub>O', as an aesthetic object, a symbol of wisdom, something to drink, and so on. But the more I am taken by thirst, the more does the water reveal itself to me in only one of these forms, viz., in its compatible-character as the correlate of a pursuit. All the same, I never cease to intend it as *water*, i.e., as this particular being and not



some other; never does the being totally lose its beingness for me, even as it becomes progressively infused with an affinity that corresponds directly to the intensity of my desire.

Likewise from the angle of the *intentio*, which tends toward an equally conflictual and paradoxical *desiring-comportment*. This means that even while the human's range of possible action suffers a progressive diminishment, its comportment never falls back into the absolute pursuit characteristic of pure being-in-the-earth, and precisely because the human is always still oriented toward a being and not a pure compatible. The more severe is my thirst, the less I am able to do as I please, since my concern is to that extent absorbed in my pursuit of the water-compatible – *and yet*, never does my act totally lose its character as a free possibility of my being, for insofar as I remain oriented toward a *being*, then just to that extent am I separated from the world by the nihilation of projection.

If we take this notion of the gravitational pull of the axes of concern to its logical conclusion, we must say that at the threshold of living existence, at the point of the maximum intensification of desire and hence the maximum contraction of comportment to pursuit, what is disclosed is an object whose being corresponds to its compatibility and nothing besides. Here, at the point of the absolute coalescence of the orectic and hermeneutic *ases*, the halo of significations in which the object is normally enveloped fades and dissipates, leaving behind only a

kernel of meaning that constitutes the being's *universal significance* – a sense that applies *a priori* to the whole of living existence. Universal significance is unveiled at the threshold of interpretability and thus at the threshold of being itself; in other words, it is the point at which *the ontic becomes ontological*, i.e., when a particular ontic sense acquires an ontological status. Universal sense is thus originary or *primordial* sense. To be sure, not every entity possesses such universal significance, but only those entities that can double as compatibles, and indeed only by virtue of their compatibility character (i.e., only those entities that can double as the *intentum* of a pure pursuit). Moreover, this universal sense implies not only a fixity of meaning but indeed a fixity of *value*, a natural value system grounded in desire. In a way that is simply impossible for pure life, living existence interprets certain entities, compatible-beings, as universal goods, and precisely due to their compatibleness (Canguilhem has also insisted on this point). Such goods are a unique product of the world-earth; not only could they never be found in a pure earth, but just as little could they emerge within a pure world insofar as a pure existent would be just as totally stripped of desire as a pure being-in-the-earth would be of concern.

#### B. The structural composition of the world-earth

Up to this point in our analysis we have been discussing only those

beings and compartments that correspond to the *intentio* and *intentum* of pure desire. However, this contraction of possibilities and fixing of meaning does not stop there, but rather infiltrates, by degrees, the full body of the world. Humanity is united not merely by the truism that all living existences eat, drink and the like, but in addition, and especially, by the essential likeness of the realms, the 'microcosms', which these axial concerns open up. What the notion of axial concerns reveals is that the sum of human activity in its extraordinary diversity, the virtual infinity of things the human may do or be, always and necessarily unfolds within a field the general parameters of which are shaped and influenced by desire inasmuch as it constitutes its organizing framework. Around the axes there assemble various natural contexts comprising regions, equipment, practices, methods, etc. *The axes are that by virtue of which the total regime of everyday concern congeals and hangs together as a coherent and universal whole.* However strange and terrible one world may appear to another, all worlds are mutually and intuitively intelligible inasmuch as they are framed by the same basic distribution of concerned compartment; and indeed this identical distribution is just what allows worlds to reveal themselves *as* more or less similar or different in the first place. Foreign ways of seeing, understanding and doing can appear *as such*, as alien and inexplicable, only because they are intuitively recognized as different modes of comporting vis-à-vis axial concerns that are common to humanity as

such; living desire is the *condition of possibility* of anything like 'foreignness'.

Again we may examine this from the point of view of either the act or the object. Regarding the former, we may say that around every axis of concern there coalesces an entire repertoire of knowledge and practices more or less specifically invested in that concern and geared toward dealing with it. For example, because sheltering constitutes an axial concern, there are always manifold ways of constructing, fortifying, enhancing and repairing shelters, just as with regard to the axial concern of alimentation there are always ways of procuring and preparing food and drink. The natural emergence of such clusters of comportment that surround and accrue to these and other axial concerns is a universal feature of living existence that functions to restrict the otherwise radical variability and contingency of our everyday dealings with things. The same holds true on the side of the object, i.e., for the ensemble of beings in and through which these comportmental dealings are necessarily actualized or disengaged. Desire always has a hand in determining which things get disclosed as beings in the first place, as well as how beings already discovered get interpreted. Because there are always and everywhere ways of sheltering, there are also always and everywhere beings suited to sheltering: materials for covering, concealing, enclosing, supporting, barricading and the like, as well as tools and equipment for tying,

fastening, sundering, pounding, pulling and so forth. Because there are always ways of procuring and preparing food, there are always beings designed for cutting, heating, containing, preserving, handling, stirring, carrying, etc.

Moreover, this contraction and consequent universalization of both sense and praxis are grounded in the structure of the living body. Recall that the body exhibits, as we said, a certain natural fitness or even pre-established harmony (in a strictly phenomenal sense) that corresponds to, or is co-given with, the *a priori* compatibility of the compatible (i.e., only those objects that the body is naturally equipped to pursue can constitute compatibles for it in the first place). Now this natural organization of the body, its constitutional fitness for particular pursuits and counter-provocations, is itself a founding layer of the world's worldhood. Accordingly, inasmuch as the body itself is an absorptive, homogenizing force, we must admit that the world grows smaller in direct proportion to its proximity to the body. For example, that the concepts, customs and practices pertaining to cooking and eating vary widely from one culture to the next is obvious enough. But what is just as obvious is that it is precisely by virtue of the fact that all human beings eat with their hands and mouths, and not their legs and back, that the whole diversity of implements that human beings have designed and created for eating exhibit the common characteristic of being suitable for transferring food from hands to mouths; it is just this

*life*-commonality that constitutes the *essential limit* of that otherwise limitless diversity.

It is clear, then, that there is something like an *a priori order of universality* grounded in distance from axes of concern, that is to say, a 'logical' order of possibility grounded in life. In any particular world, across differing worlds or within any admixture of worlds, there are always beings and practices that are more or less universal, immediately intuited. A knife or a jug is far more universal, because far closer to life, than, say, a television, a satellite or some decorative bauble. For this reason it would not be wildly unreasonable to speculate that there is also an *a priori historical* order of disclosure of beings, a kind of ontological course of 'maturation', complexification or diversification of existence – in short, that there is a certain fixed pattern or sequence to the world's worlding due to the influence of the earth. No doubt the *first beings*, i.e., the first things to be disclosed as beings, are those that possess universal significance; these would then be primordial beings. Next are the myriad beings mobilized around the primordial beings, etc. This is also to suggest that what we refer to as social or historical 'development' is never a linear but rather and always a *centrifugal* process, a radiating outward from fixed life-centres. Certainly primordial here does not imply anything like primitive in the sense of backward or underdeveloped, inasmuch as the primordality of these original beings is operative in the most 'advanced' societies.

### C. The spatiality and temporality of the world-earth

These reflections on the universal, 'gravitational' attraction and contraction of the possibilities of both interpretation and action around axes of concern complicate our understanding of the spatiality and temporality of the human being-there taken as a pure existence. The space and time within which the *living* existent moves, lives and works is never organized in accordance with the present state of the *pure* world but rather and always in accordance with the world insofar as it is framed, organized and held together by the earth, by pursuits qua axial concerns.

Let us first consider space. In his SS 1925 lectures Heidegger writes:

The placing of environmental things right down to the arrangement of a room is governed by what I already have in my everyday concern and how my Dasein is itself determined as being in the world. The placing of environmental things, the determination of where they belong in a region, is in turn founded in the primary presence of concern.<sup>40</sup>

This is certainly true as far as determinate regions and places are

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<sup>40</sup> GA 20, 311/226.

concerned. But just insofar as life-pursuits constitute the axes around which concern is always organized and deployed, we should have to say that the placement of the places themselves is thereby influenced, somehow and in some measure, by life. For example, that dwellings are built here and there, in this place or that, is entirely contingent. But that all dwellings are built either within or in close proximity to certain places that also double as sectors of affinity is not. How this building and placing are factually (ontically) carried out is entirely arbitrary and irrelevant; what is essential is only that this always taking into account of these sectors, this concerned reckoning and negotiating with them, is a structural-ontological feature of living existence as such. All places bear some relation to other places where pure life would be more or less likely to encounter compatibles. This 'more or less' is the index of distance: that is, certain things simply have to be within reach. There are absolute limits – e.g., an absolute 'too far from...' – which must always be respected and against which all possible activity is measured (which is why some places are simply uninhabitable).

The example of the dwelling is doubly instructive in that it is itself a microcosm, a miniature world framed and shaped by axes of concern. Indeed it is precisely this compartmental orientation vis-à-vis axial concerns that co-constitutes the dwelling-character of the dwelling; one truly dwells always and only in some active relation to such concerns. In this way the dwelling itself is always carved up into 'places for...',



the targets of which have their origin in life. There are places for cooking and eating, places for resting, places for warmth, places for shade, and so on. *Which* such places are actually present is entirely contingent, but *that* the dwelling comprises some combination of such places is simply a structural feature of the dwelling as such, that which makes it a dwelling rather than an office or workshop. For this reason, the fact that a human may 'live', i.e., 'survive', in a shanty, hovel or cell, a mere hole in the ground where there are no places for anything, is not an onto-phenomenological but a *social* criticism; what is at stake is not the ontological make-up of the dwelling itself but rather the human being's ownmost way to be. A *living* existent can never dwell in a hole, even if it is surrounded by 'beings' toward which it might 'comport' itself 'concernfully' – and to the extent that it is forced to do so it is stripped of its very humanity. The human is here reduced to a pure existent, a being-amidst-beings and nothing besides; in consequence its living desire grows disproportionately intense and its being is given over more and more to pure pursuit, like an animal.

What we have said of space also holds good for the temporality of living existence. For entities such as ourselves, constituted by ecstatic projection, the phenomenon of compatibility-pursuit takes on a temporal significance: there is not only a natural fitness but also a perceptible order, regularity, rhythmicity, cyclicity, etc.; time is marked not by a constant repetition of difference but rather by

constantly differing repetitions: there are recurring 'times for...', i.e., for pursuits as well as for provocations that arise to thwart and derail those pursuits.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the earth can assail and bestow in such a way as to threaten and undermine this very constancy itself: in its revealing, concealing and provoking, the earth can in a strange way turn against and contradict itself, work as a force of spontaneous destabilization and deregularization, disrupting the reassuring predictability of its own movement.

This double phenomenon of the establishing but also the undermining of a kind of rhythmicity complicates our understanding of ecstatic projection in two principal ways. For one thing, and most immediately, projection itself turns out to be co-structured by axial concerns. In other words, axes of concern are always and simultaneously *axes of projection*; the very 'ahead of' or 'outside' in which the ek-static human existent always already moves is itself determined by life. This outside is one in which night is constantly changing into day, the seasons are constantly turning over, things to eat, drink, wear, etc.,

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<sup>41</sup> Merleau-Ponty gives the obvious example of sleeping and waking – 'reciprocal terms of a unique function...as much under the dependence of the organism as under that of culture. To sleep at night, to wake in the day, these are social facts. But the existence of periods of continuous sleep is an organic fact.' See Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.* (2003), 146f.

will have to be pursued and procured time and time again. These are not extraneous factors that may or may not have to be taken into account; rather they are constitutive of *the* outside itself in which *every* living existent stands. Every ontically determinate past and future situation from out of and into which the human throws itself is necessarily co-structured by axial concerns; it is impossible, absent a total obliteration of being-in-the-earth, for the human to project itself into a future in and for which all axial concerns are completely deactivated, rendered totally null and void. But for another thing, and just as importantly, the range and expansiveness of the human's projective horizon varies in direct proportion to the proximity of concern to its axis. Heidegger is correct to ground the transcendence of the human in projection, but insofar as he does not perceive the co-structuring role of life, i.e., insofar as he thinks the human as a pure existence, he treats this transcendence as something static and eternal. But just as the possibilities of interpretation shrink down to the object's sheer compatibility, and those of action to sheer pursuit, so too do past and future contract ever more acutely into the present the closer some modality of concern approaches its axis, its core. In moments of near-absolute pursuit, the future consists of nothing but the coming acquisition of the compatible-being; when concern is more remote from the earth and pursuit, more exclusively worldly, projection is virtually limitless.

#### D. The being-with of living existence

If life qua being-in-the-earth is a having and pursuing of things as compatibles and incompatibles (or provocations), then it is obvious that a portion of these things always belongs to the earth itself – in other words, that while it is certain that not all compatibles and provocations involve the living, it is never the case that none of them do. Thus life implicates life in a fundamental sense: to a not insignificant degree, life is necessarily a pursuit of the living and a being provoked by the living (in pursuit of the living). Only in this sense may we speak of anything like an absolute ‘immanence’ of life.

It is precisely this ‘immanence’ of life, this folding of life within life (i.e., life’s own having and pursuing life itself in accordance with the way in which things are given to life), that constitutes the ‘being-with’ structure peculiar to pure life. To be sure, this *with* of pure life is not the same as the *with* of pure existence, insofar as the latter is grounded in an ontological publicness in and for which each human being-there is always already constituted by an anonymous *One*; pure life does not have or partake of anything like a *One*, a public. But since the human way to be is neither pure life nor pure existence but rather their unity, the question naturally arises as to how these two *with*-structures merge to form a single, compound ‘with-ness’, how the orectic *with* is implicated in the public *with* – or simply, how living existents *are-with*

other living existents in the full world-earth.

We have established that desire is both the condition of possibility and the index of worldly foreignness; it is the standard against which all worldly differences can first emerge and be measured as such. But this is simply to say that there exists a common or universal element of our publicness, our 'being-with' – i.e., a *universal public* or *universal 'withness'* – which grounds and sustains, but also transcends and binds together, every merely local and contingent public. In a fundamental sense, we must all give the same answer to the question of 'who' we are – or more precisely, if the answer to the question of 'the who of Dasein' is *the One* or *the Anyone, das Man*, then it is no less true that the Anyone as such, i.e., every possible Anyone, is linked to every other Anyone by virtue of desire, that the Anyone is always already *Everyone*. Thus when Heidegger remarks that even a primitive human being 'transplanted among us exercises his understanding in this world [i.e., in the shared, public world as a milieu of changing familiarity], even though it can be utterly strange to him in its detail',<sup>42</sup> or again, that even the 'strangest man whom we encounter is with me in my world',<sup>43</sup> we must qualify these statements by stressing that what is never 'utterly strange' are the axial concerns themselves that provide the natural continuity from one

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<sup>42</sup> GA 20, 334/242.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 331/240.

world to another and that constitute the actual substance of our immediate comprehension of alien worlds. It is never the mere fact of the other's *pure* intraworldliness (the fact that the other possesses being-understanding and hence comports himself toward beings qua beings) that serves to mitigate or eliminate the other's strangeness or other-worldliness for me; rather such mitigation is accomplished through the fact that, despite our perhaps radical worldly estrangement, the other and I are nonetheless bound to each other as equally (and equally fundamentally) belonging to, and therefore equally constituted by, a single Everyone that embraces the whole of living existence qua living.

From this it would seem to follow that what Heidegger calls 'the closest kind of encounter with another' lies *not*, as he says, 'in the direction of the very world in which concern is absorbed'<sup>44</sup> – that is to say, in the world *as such*, the world qua world as the zone of concern in the most general sense, since in this case there would arise the possibility of radically and perhaps insurmountably alien or heterogeneous regimes of concern, i.e., regimes whose proximity would consist in nothing more than the sheer fact that each constitutes a certain organization and distribution of concern like the other – but rather and only in the direction of those universal axes around which worldly concern congeals, those moments where earthly desire and worldly

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 332/241.

comportment converge on a single vital-existential activity that implicates never just Anyone but always and essentially Everyone. Moreover, this is equally true irrespective of whether the other in question is a foreign or alien, an 'otherworldly', other, or to the contrary another from my own world. As for the former case, we know from experience that this 'alien' sort of encounter is oftentimes the most fulfilling of all, and for the very reason that the usual local-intraworldly commonalities are entirely absent. There is a kind of 'de-worlding' of the field that clears away a free site for a purer form of encounter, one that is perhaps much more deeply rooted than our everyday, pedestrian interactions in our full human way to be. Sometimes the fact that I can do nothing more than huddle by the fire or share a meal with a stranger is the source of an uncanny bond that forms between us, for at such moments we are united, not through mere '*Seinsverständnis*', but through living desire, in the manner of a co-approaching vis-à-vis one and the same axial concern. Likewise in the latter case, inasmuch as it is precisely such concerns that constitute the nodes or anchor points that fix our world into place and prevent it from deteriorating into a maelstrom of unrelated comportments. If the public is encountered in the totality of 'what One does', then it is no less true that this doing is never totally arbitrary; we are bound to the others of our own world precisely by the manifold ways in which we approach the universal axes of desire *in common*, i.e., as distinct from the ways in which *these*

*same axes* are approached in other worlds by other existents.

But still further yet, if living desire is the force that unifies the diversity of worlds and holds each particular world together into and as itself, then it is obvious that the universal public does not stop at living existence, at the exclusively human realm, but rather extends out to *the whole of the living as such*. To be sure, the claim here is not that all living beings have some thematic awareness of being bound up with the full life community; only the human qua living *existence* can have anything like a public, since the human is the only being that can have itself (i.e., have its being, be concerned for itself) as the other. Nor is it to indulge in some edenic fantasy to the effect that all living beings, humans and animals alike, might coexist harmoniously on the earth. It has rather and simply to do with a *recognition* on the part of living existence that precisely what it intuits about the stranger it *may* also intuit about the animal, and the animal about it qua living being, and still deeper, that the axial concerns that bind it in the most primal way to the other living existent are identical to the pursuits and negotiations in which the animal, too, is perpetually engaged. By virtue of this recognition there arises in living existence a vague intimation of an absolutely universal public stemming from pure life. We might refer to this absolutely universal public as *the All* as opposed to the Anyone and the Everyone, and in this way we may say, borrowing a phrase from Jacobi, that the human is never merely One but always and essentially *One and All*.



#### IV. Conclusion

Our guiding aim in this chapter was admittedly a rather limited one: it was to combine and thus to reconcile the various interpretive themes that emerged in our reading of certain of Heidegger's texts above – the early insistence on a unitary and universal life-horizon comprising both a desiring and an existing element; the ontological distinctness of the mode of being of existence as an apprehending of being as such; the isolation of the earth as something like an autonomous zone of manifestation characterized by assault, provocation and withdrawal – in order to provide a rough and provisional outline sketch of some of the major themes, concepts and approaches that a Heideggerian life-phenomenology might take up and develop at greater length. We have argued that by treating life and existence, being-in-the-earth and being-in-the-world, as equiprimordial ways or modes of partaking of a single, two-dimensional field or 'there', we could perhaps overcome or circumvent some of the obstacles and aporias that compromise Heidegger's own thinking about life (e.g., the reduction of life to alienated existence, the absolute denial of human life, the need for the earth to found the very world in which it first appears, etc.). However, we have as yet said almost nothing concerning what is perhaps the most conspicuous and intuitively compelling aspect of life, viz., the *need* and *necessity* which we feel to be so central to the experience of living, the

privation and insecurity that cause Heidegger's peasant farmer so much worry and anxiety. Nothing resembling brute necessity has emerged in our discussion either of pure life or living existence in itself. Have we merely overlooked need in our analysis, or is this rather to suggest that need is at bottom nothing but a hollow fiction? It is with this question in mind that we must now turn to the final item on our itinerary: living existence in and for itself. Simply put, from whence does the experience of need ultimately arise?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Living Existence In and For Itself:**

#### **Need, Survival and Technology**

##### I. Need as form of appearance of life

In our analysis of being-in-the-earth thus far we have insisted time and again that such phenomena as need, necessity, privation, self-preservation and the like are nowhere to be found – that is to say, in the sheer living-out or living-through of life, in the actual experience of actually lived life. Yet in holding fast to this view we seem to contradict not only the most basic determination of the scientific understanding of life, but indeed and above all of what we feel, even intuit, to lie at the very heart of life; the very thing that we claim to be absent from the experience of life appears to constitute, to the contrary, nothing less than the core of our experience of life. The view that need and necessity are completely and fundamentally absent from life appears to be the most un-phenomenological of all. Therefore it is important to get clear on precisely what is and is not being put forward.

Let us recall that we have nowhere argued that the phenomena of need, want, etc. are not somehow grounding, fundamental, even

essential; rather we have said only that these are not constitutive of *pure* being-in-the-earth. Pure life in its actual living is neither anything like a prior needing of things that subsequently prompts various preservation-behaviours nor a structural emptiness that drives desire on from one thing to the next. Rather this is only one possible *interpretation* of life. Yet this interpretation is nevertheless an originary or primordial one, which is to say, a necessary one; in the natural attitude, in our average everyday way of comporting ourselves vis-à-vis the world, life *cannot but* appear to us in this light. Need, in short, is constitutive of *the peculiar way in which we ourselves live, i.e., existentially; it is a fundamental, essential condition of our own living existence*. This has nothing to do with any suggestion to the effect that only human life is characterized by need while plant and animal life knows nothing of need; that is, it has nothing to do with any claim about the presence or absence of a real, material neediness or with the knowledge or lack of knowledge of this neediness. It is rather and simply to say that need is a structure of a particular sort of experience, viz., the sort that arises at the interface of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth; it is a function of their mutual co-arising in and as a single, unified horizon of manifestation (thus the need in question here is also to be distinguished from such purely worldly sorts of 'need' as duty, obligation, responsibility, etc.). Whenever it comes about that these two modes of disclosure – orectic disclosure and being-disclosure – are co-constitutive of the field of dis-

closure as such, there and only there does need proper arise, and indeed in an equally originary and irreducible fashion. In this way we are confronted with the challenge of explicating precisely how this interpretation comes about and wherein its own necessity ultimately lies.

That need is at bottom a function of the confluence of life and existence is easily perceived by considering the commonsense answer we are inclined to give to the question of the meaning of need. If we were to ask someone sceptical of our position, 'What is the meaning of this "need" the apriority of which you so steadfastly insist upon?', the response would no doubt take the following form: 'If I do not..., then I will die'. In other words, the usual answer comes in the form of a simple factual conditional, 'if not  $x$ , then  $y$ ', where the protasis implies anticipation of some future event  $y = \text{death}$ . Thus the average everyday meaning of need is grounded in an ecstatic-projective temporalization that takes the form, specifically, of an anticipatory projection toward death, or simply, in a mode of being defined essentially as a being-toward-death. Accordingly need must somehow emerge out of the structural intertwining of projection, death and living desire.

Let us now proceed to attempt to untangle these threads. Inasmuch as need is understood as a function of the co-actualization of life and existence, it can be described as *transcendental* in a quasi-Kantian sense – that is, as a kind of 'category' or pure concept, a condition of possible experience for all entities that *are* in this particular way (viz., living

existence). What we are aiming for might thus be aptly characterized as a 'transcendental deduction of need'. Again it must be stressed that this need is nothing imaginary, ideal, mental or whatever else, but rather and only *phenomenal*. What is at stake is a *real need*, something really and actually given, something that resides not in the mind but out *there*, i.e., out in the world-earth in the midst of which we ourselves always already dwell, and therefore something that is in ourselves firstly and most immediately of all.

#### A. The deduction of need from the structure of living existence

The deduction can be schematized along the lines of the two distinct items or clauses of the above conditional: (1) the emergence of need as a function of projection, and (2) the linking or identification of this need with death. We shall consider each item in turn.

##### 1. The deduction of need as a function of projection

Being-understanding, possession of which sets the human apart from every other being, is grounded in the human's unique mode of temporalization, viz., ecstatic projection.<sup>1</sup> Projection signifies the human's

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., GA 24, 453/318: 'Because of the unity of the horizontal schemata

perpetual throwing itself ahead of itself from out of its past in such a way that every present is already a retrojective anticipation. In other words, the human is not 'in time' in the manner of an object suspended between a factually determinate past and future; rather it is the very 'betweening' of this 'between' itself, the stretching of the stretch of time in virtue of which all three temporal ecstases are drawn together and gathered into a single, unitary horizon.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely by means of this gathering-stretching that the congealing – the 'forming' or 'prevailing' – of world occurs as the opening up of an originary sphere of understandability within which beings can first come to reveal themselves 'as' what they *are*:

*In projection there occurs the letting-prevail of the being of beings in the whole of their possible binding character in each case. In projection world prevails...[Yet] this projection is also that relating in which the 'as' springs forth. For the 'as' expresses the fact that beings in general have become manifest in their being, that that distinction has*

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that belong to its ecstatic unity, temporality makes possible the understanding of being, so that it is only in the light of this understanding of being that the Dasein can comport itself toward its own self, toward others as beings, and toward the extant as beings.'

<sup>2</sup> GA 2, 495f./426f. Cf. GA 29/30, 530f./364f.

occurred. The 'as' designates the structural moment of that originally *irruptive* 'between'. We simply never first have 'something' and then 'something more' and then the possibility of taking something *as* something, but the complete reverse: something first gives itself to us only when we are already moving within projection, within the 'as'.<sup>3</sup>

Now because world is opened up projectively in this way, by means of the human's structural futurity, it follows that the phenomenon of being-in-the-world is never anything like a solipsistic auto-affectivity but rather and essentially an '*opening for making-possible*' (i.e., for the possible as such *qua futural* and not for any factually determinate future possibility). The human *is* most authentically (itself) in the manner of a *being-in-the-open-of-the-possible*; it is an originary *being-free-for...*, not an entity that happens to be endowed with the faculty of freedom, but rather 'the free' itself as a pure potentiality-for-being. Thus the world as the zone of understandability of being is equally the zone of potentiality, which is simply to say that being itself is always appresented and apprehended in terms of futurity, possibility – or in a word, *difference*. 'Being' signifies a *Gegenwärtigen*, an 'enpresenting' of something *as* something such that this *as* implicates an open horizon of successive

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<sup>3</sup> GA 29/30, 530f./365.



enpresentings; in this way everything that *is*, i.e., is in being, is always already separated from itself, always already susceptible to a new enpresenting onto another *praesens*. This horizon of possible enpresenting ultimately points back to the radical being-free-for of ecstatic projection itself; hence the sundry beings with which the human has to do in its everyday dealings always disclose themselves in ways that are commensurate with its ownmost potentiality-for-being.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this being-as-enpresenting extends to the human itself insofar as it is also and equally a being, i.e., insofar as it manifests itself to itself within the horizon of its own potentiality as something like an individual 'self'. In other words, the human always has itself as a *free being*, an objectified self-that-is-free-to-be-different, and this freedom-of-self is itself grounded in the more primordial being-free-for of its ecstatic-projective being-in-the-world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> GA 24, 392/277: '[That] upon which the Dasein projects itself is a can-be of its own self.' This is why any particular piece of equipment or equipmental contexture 'is not determinable but always optional and variable within certain limits' (233/164).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, 391/276: "'The Dasein is occupied with its own being'" means more precisely: it is occupied with its own *ability to be*. As existent, the Dasein is free for specific possibilities of its own self. It is its own most peculiar able-to-be...If the Dasein is free for definite

Such is how matters stand, then, with *pure* existence as an in-being within the *pure* world. As we have seen, however, the world-*earth* within which the *living* existent dwells is structured by and woven around axes of concern that correspond to particular moments of desire. The closer the human draws to an axis, the more does the halo of possible significations contract to the universal signification of the compatible and the horizon of possible action to the universal comportment of pursuit, such that at the outer fringes of living existence we discover something like a comportment-pursuit of a compatible-being. This is the status of living existence *in itself*, the pure combination of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth; need, we can see, is nowhere to be found even here. But in considering the problem in this way, we have first to prescind from the human's projective constitution, to disregard its always standing-out-beyond itself. Everything changes once we factor in the essential fact that the human *is* in such a way (qua existent) that it always already has its own potentiality-for-being, its being-free-for..., at issue for it. Taking this into account, we may surmise that *need emerges out of the projection of the expansion and contraction of the horizon of comportment and interpretation against the backdrop of the ur-horizon of the existent's being-free-for-its-*

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possibilities of itself, for its ability to be, then the Dasein is in this *being-free-for*; it is these possibilities themselves.'

*ownmost-potentiality-for-being*. More specifically, whenever desire draws concern toward it such that concern encounters itself in pursuit of a universal compatible-being, the halo of possible (futural) enpresentings of this being does not simply vanish but rather *hangs there along with it in projection*, haunting it as *its own* unrealized possibility. The halo pervades in a kind of steady perduring; it is what escorts the being through the compatibility phase of its ontical history. This perduring is what allows the halo to come to appear as an *impossibility* at the precise moment of the coalescence of the orectic and hermeneutic *ases*, that is to say, allows the contraction to be seen *as a contraction*, namely, of the halo itself. Only in this way, in the translucency afforded by projection as that which allows one particular relatedness to be apprehended as the negation or preclusion of manifold other forms of relatedness, does something like need or necessity arise (subsequently these 'needs' get codified as instincts, drives, urges and the like). Thus to return to an earlier example: at the moment of the most extreme thirst, I apprehend the water as nothing more than what it *is qua compatible* – namely, *as* the drinkable. And yet the horizon of differentiation in accordance with which I normally apprehend and comport myself to water is nonetheless *still there*; not only does it precede and follow my thirst, it *lingers through* the thirst as a trace, an impression. Even as I perceive nothing but 'the drinkable' as the *intentum* of my desiring-comportment, the differential expansiveness of the water is somehow never

completely lost to me. And it is just this hanging of the temporary contraction of significance to compatibility within the lingering differential hermeneutical expansiveness (halo) opened up by projection that causes the interpretation of the water as the 'to-be-drunk' to appear as a necessary one, the result of an 'urge-toward-water'.

## 2. The experience of death as event

Death, Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*, 'is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein'.<sup>6</sup> Death, in other words, is nothing like an event that happens one fine day to an unsuspecting ego-thing, but rather a structure of existence itself, the internal limit of the human's potentiality-for-being. Death is a '*being-toward-the-end*', a 'way to be that Dasein takes over as soon as it is. "As soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die".'<sup>7</sup> The notion that death is merely one occurrence among innumerable other occurrences is the opinion of death that circulates through the public: 'death is "known" as a mishap which is constantly occurring – as a "case of death". Someone or other "dies" ...People who are no acquaintances of ours are "dying" daily and hourly. "Death" is encountered as a well-known event occurring within

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<sup>6</sup> GA 2, 333/294.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 326/289.

the world.’<sup>8</sup> In this way death is levelled down, ‘perverted’, made into a subject of gossip and idle speculation.

All the same, in the context of an enquiry into living (not pure) existence, the phenomenon of the death-*event* takes on new importance. For here we must ask how death could ever function *as structure* in the first place if it were not *already* given *as death*, i.e., as something occurring in the world. How could death be the being-toward-the-end of my potentiality-for-being if I had never known or experienced death? What would ever prompt me to suppose or hypothesize something like an internal finitude to my being-in-the-world? Is it not the case that an actual, concrete awareness of death is the *condition of possibility* of death as structure? Heidegger does not overlook this question but rather is simply uninterested in it given his problem. Indeed he acknowledges that ‘[cases] of death may be the factual occasion for Dasein’s first paying attention to death at all’, but this is of no consequence to him. The fact that ‘the dying of others is something that one experiences daily’, that ‘[death] is an undeniable “fact of experience”’,<sup>9</sup> is reduced to the level of the public’s empty chatter about death, part of the strategy by which the public evades its death and avoids having to deal with the certainty of death. Thus Heidegger has virtually nothing to say about

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 336f./296f.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 341f./301.

the *nature* of this 'experience' of death and 'paying attention' to death. How is death really apprehended? How does death get experienced as death at all? Since death is at bottom a phenomenon of life, we are inclined to say that we experience death as the ending of life. But how and in what way do we 'experience the ending of life'?

From our discussion of pure being-in-the-earth, we know that although pure life must have or apprehend other living beings within its horizon of compatibility, it nevertheless cannot and does not have such beings *as living*; a purely living being would never have other living beings *as 'alive'*, i.e., as fellow earth-dwellers, but only ever as compatibles and incompatibles. But this is not the case with living existence. We do have the living as such, and precisely because we ourselves partake of the very same being-in-the-earth as every other being that lives. If we did not live in this primordial way, if 'life' were only an intraworldly determination of certain intraworldly beings, then it would seem that not only our factual knowledge of life but indeed our very capacity to identify life could only ever arise from out of the sphere of our existence exclusively. But just as our knowledge of life does not stem either firstly or principally from our study of biology, ecology, zoology and the like, it would be absurd to maintain that we first become acquainted with the living on the basis of such study. We do not need to assess beings against a list of criteria culled from the various life-related fields or even from common sense in order to be

able to determine which are living and which not; just the same we never (or rarely) need to go through any process of memorizing certain living beings and then extrapolating from those to others unfamiliar, grafting mental representations onto new perceptions in order to determine whether this or that being is alive. The fact that we *can* learn this way in *some* cases is itself already indicative of the deep, intuitive knowledge of life we possess precisely by virtue of our own living. The living being's pursuit of compatibles and negotiation of incompatibles is immediately understood by us as what it is; conversely, whenever we see a being in pursuit, we immediately and intuitively understand this being to be living, and completely irrespective of whether we might be factually mistaken in this.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Heidegger himself gives the following example (ZS, 75): '[We] walk in a forest and see something move along the way. We even hear it rustle and receive-perceive it as something living. When we look at it more carefully, it turns out that we were mistaken, for a barely noticeable gust of wind had moved the leaves on the ground. Therefore, it was not any living thing. Yet in order to be able to be mistaken in this assumption that it was something living, we must have seen something like life in advance, something like the nature of living things within the context about which we were mistaken.' (Cf. GA 24, 14/10: 'If we did not understand what life and vitality signify, then we would not be able to

Now it is precisely on the basis of this intuitive identification with the living qua living that the experience of death becomes comprehensible. For if our knowledge of the living qua living stems from our own insider's view of living desire, it stands to reason that we come to know death as the negation of desire, as the cessation of pursuit. In short, we first become aware of death as *the event of the absolute cessation of the desiring-pursuit of a fellow living being*. More precisely, we see that a *living body* has ceased to pursue, i.e., we become aware of a *dead body, a corpse*, as, specifically, a *body-that-no-longer-pursues*. The body, however, is what stands at the very centre of the 'there' in which we dwell, in which case pursuit itself (inasmuch as our own body is a living, pursuing body) is always already intimately associated with the event of the opening up of the 'there' as a horizon of free potentiality. It therefore follows that the converse experience of the absolute cessation of pursuit via the corpse is connected with the cessation or *closure* of the 'there', more specifically, in its having itself at issue for itself as a being, viz., as a free self. *Thus the cessation of bodily pursuit is primordially associated with the cessation of the self*. Here it must be stressed that 'association' and

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comport ourselves toward living beings.') But of course we 'see something like life in advance' only because we know life intuitively, from the inside out; our mistaking the rustling leaves for an animal stems from our living-with other earthly beings such as ourselves.



'connection' do not imply perception of any causal relation; we are talking about a natural and intuitive linking generated out of the very structure of living existence as such. We should never have to wait for medical science to prove to us, for example, that the disintegration of the body leads to a concomitant loss of 'consciousness'. We know this already and immediately – and completely irrespective of whether it happens to be factually or metaphysically true – on the basis of the inner complicity of bodily pursuit with ecstatic projection.

### 3. The inner unity of need and death

The pursuit the cessation of which is tied to the loss of the 'there' or the self is the very same pursuit that is manifest as 'need' insofar as it is seen to entail the shrinkage of the halo of possible action and interpretation vis-à-vis the ur-horizon of projection. Pursuit always assumes this twofold character: that which is necessary, and that the cessation of which implies death. In this way pursuit is manifest as a *compound necessity*, the necessity of necessity: the living existent understands that in order to maintain the integrity of its 'there', in order to remain a free self, it is constrained to submit the body to the constraints of pursuit; preservation of the free self is seen to depend on total bodily compliance with the unfreedom of pursuit.

But just here we notice something truly remarkable: viz., that for

living existence *life itself, being-in-the-earth, is construed as the very antithesis of life, as the negation of life, while non-life is promoted to the status of life.* Life is perceived as the continuity of the 'there' or self,<sup>11</sup> while being-in-the-earth qua pursuit and negotiation is understood as that which looms menacingly over life and threatens it with death. Pursuit is not seen as the very *essence* of life, but rather as that which must be appeased in order to maintain or preserve 'life'; the integrity of the 'there' is secured only for as long as one yields to the contractions of pursuit. Here, then, we have the *onto-phenomenological ground* of the common and familiar determination of 'life' as self-preservation, *survival*. Life is seen as survival just insofar as it holds death at bay by submitting to the dictates of pursuit. Self-preservation turns out to be the grounding experience and inner sense-content of the conditional that common sense gives as its answer to the question of the meaning of need; the statement, 'If I do not..., then I will die', says as much as, 'The integrity and preservation of my self, my "there", depends wholly on my "survival", my submission to the necessity of pursuit'. If the human being-there is the being that *is* 'for-the-sake-of-itself', the being whose own being is always at issue, then this having-itself-at-issue, while not

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<sup>11</sup> That is, 'to be alive' means to be or to remain in the *Da*, to be 'here' and 'there', regardless of whether this might entail a temporary factual loss of 'consciousness' (e.g., in sleep).

simply coextensive with the imperative to survive, nonetheless can never be separated from it entirely. Living existence is never concerned *merely* with the potentiality of its pure 'there', but always also with the integrity and preservation of this 'there' as an objective self.<sup>12</sup>

### B. Implications of the deduction

Such, then, is our highly schematic deduction of the common, prosaic view of life from the internal structure of living existence as such. The perception of life as self-preservation and survival, and of need as the ominousness of death, is given exclusively on the basis of the peculiar way in which being-in-the-world as a being-amidst-beings and being-in-the-earth as desiring-pursuit are co-present in and for a 'there' that has itself as a freedom-for-its-ownmost-possibilities inasmuch as it is opened up by projection. Need and survival are thus real in the same sense that a category is real, as a necessary form of appearance. Even when, through phenomenological analysis, we are able to grasp them as they are in themselves, still we remain powerless to be rid of them. For they are nothing more or less than the ways in which we ourselves qua

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Theodor Adorno, Knut Tarnowski (tr.), Frederic Will (tr.), *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 136.

living existents are constrained to be for ourselves as living. If there is anything like an ancient, originary oblivion of life, it lies precisely here: in the eclipsing of the reality of desire and pursuit by the reality of need and survival. From the beginning life is manifest to us as the sum of all threats to 'life', as the totality of that against which 'life' is condemned to struggle to hold out. Small wonder, then, that we turn around and discover this holding out to be ubiquitous in 'nature', in the plant and animal realms – that self-preservation appears to us to constitute the *objective essence* of life.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thus Heidegger, too, as we have already seen, holds the essence of life to lie in self-preservation. But since the 'openness' of life is merely the negation of the openness proper to worldly existence, it follows, paradoxically, that self-preservation arises precisely where there is not, and indeed can never be, anything like a 'self' – in the 'darkening' (*Erdunkelung*) of 'benumbment' (*Benommenheit*). Self-preservation defines the being of those beings that lack even the condition of possibility of a self. The only way to make sense of this is to appeal to something like instinct, which is nowhere present to lived life: "Life" is a "mode" of beingness (be-ing) of beings. A being begins to open up to life in the preservation of the self. In the preservation of the self the first darkening grounds the numbness [*Benommenheit*] of what is alive, in which all excitement and excitability is enacted, as well as various

As living existents, life is present to us as the perniciousness of a double necessity that constantly exposes our 'life', the perpetuity of the 'there', to the threat of closure in death. In the familiarity of the natural attitude, everything is topsy-turvy: true life is anti-life and non-life is true 'life'. Pursuit is not life but rather that to which one is compelled to submit in order to 'stay alive', to survive; in turn, this survival is not realized *in* the goings-out of pursuit but is rather the 'living-on' that happens in subjection to pursuit. Moreover, insofar as life proper is a being-in-the-earth, it follows that the earth is subject to the same perversion: when life is anti-life, the earth is seen as collaborating with the regime of need. No longer the zone of life, the earth is now that to which 'life' must always accommodate itself in order to persevere. At best the earth is manifest as not hindering 'life' in the accomplishment of its survival-related activities, even as facilitating this accomplishment. In the worst case, however, the earth is the mortal enemy of 'life', a brutal and ruthless antagonist bent on stopping pursuit dead in its tracks. The earth is therefore apprehended as the whole of those entities, forces, phenomena, etc. on which the satisfaction of pursuit and hence

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stages of the dark and its unfolding...The *darkening* and what is ownmost to *instinct*: preservation of the self and the *priority of the "species"*, which does not know any "individual" as self-related [*selbstisches*]' (GA 65, 276f./195).

'life' itself ultimately depend; survival is more or less likely according to the earth's beneficence or fecklessness, its relative clemency or hostility. So far from being the phenomenal realm opened up *by life itself*, the earth is now grasped as that which keeps 'life' trapped in a state of permanent insecurity, agitation and distress.

But here we must go even further. For if 'life' is perceived as being subject to and dependent upon the double imperative of desire – i.e., as the necessary contraction of freedom necessary for the preservation of the 'there' – then it is just as obvious that the 'there' *always eventually succumbs to death regardless of its fidelity to the demands of survival*. Pursuit thus encompasses a third and final necessity: not only the necessity of necessity as a staving-off of death, but in addition the *necessity of death despite the staving-off*. In other words, and paradoxically, the very act by means of which death is kept at bay *also and simultaneously* serves to *usher in* death. Meanwhile, on the side of the earth, a gross power disparity becomes evident: the earth is seen to be constitutionally excessive, its violence and hostility inherently gratuitous – the earth cannot but *over-provoke*; the immediate harmony holding between the earth and the body in life is perceived as a lop-sidedness in favour of the earth. While pursuit takes its toll on the pursuing body, slowly withering it to a corpse, the violent and provoking earth exacerbates and compounds this toll. Earth and pursuit appear to be involved in a kind of secret alliance to guarantee the absolute negation of pursuit in

death. Pursuit becomes at once necessary and futile; it is only a postponing of the inevitable.

Now it is precisely here, out of pursuit's taking its toll on the pursuing body itself, that the phenomenon of *aging* emerges. It is rather astonishing that Heidegger does not draw attention to aging in his discussions of death and being-toward-death, yet ultimately understandable insofar as aging is grounded in life qua being-in-the-earth and therefore is lodged most firmly and originally in the living body (none of which Heidegger acknowledges). Here we may simply remark that aging is the *manner* in which the *living* existent is the stretching of the temporal stretch. Neither pure life nor pure existence is subject to aging; rather aging happens only in a being in and for which the progressive accumulation of bodily inscriptions – of marks, scars, lesions, fractures, disfigurements, etc. – can become a matter of self-concern. For living existence in and for itself, perceiving life as survival, aging is not the recording of the history of life but only the bitter proof of the inevitable futility and transitoriness of 'life'. Aging, in short, is *dying* as the intruding-announcing of the growing imminence of the event of death. If I am a being-toward-the-end, this is not *merely* in virtue of the fact that the certainty of my eventual impossibility is built into my potentiality-for-being; rather I am a being-toward-the-end precisely in that I age, in that my dying follows me always and everywhere as the progressive destruction and deterioration of my living-pursuing body,

as the ever-encroaching event of the obliteration of my 'there' in my no-longer-being-free-to-submit-to-the-need-to-pursue. Whether a pure being-in-the-world could ever be a being-toward-the-end is highly doubtful, for how could it ever be said properly to be dying if it did not age, if it did not have its life as survival vis-à-vis the threefold necessity of pursuit and the violence of the earth, and if its self-mattering were not therefore always already conditioned by its bodily disintegration? Its end would be the most formal and abstract sort of end, just as it is for the young and healthy (likewise, whether the young and healthy, i.e., all those living existents who show no visible signs of aging, no battle scars from prolonged earthly struggle, are ever really being-toward-the-end as an always-already-dying is equally doubtful).<sup>14</sup>

In this way, finally, a *fear* of death emerges that is in fact, paradoxically, a *fear of life* qua being-in-the-earth as that which conspires to negate 'life'. Here we must admit that Heidegger's own analysis of fear is lacking just insofar as he has no real theory of life in which to ground it. Heidegger correctly notes that 'that about which we are afraid in fear

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<sup>14</sup> 'The death which Jaromil wrote about had little to do with real death. Death takes on reality only when it begins to penetrate through the crevices of old age. For Jaromil it was infinitely far away; it was abstract; it was not reality, but a dream.' Milan Kundera, *Life is Elsewhere* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1986), 104.



is being-in-the-world itself'.<sup>15</sup> It is equally true that the feared is always 'something we encounter and confront in a worldly way, and so has the character of meaningfulness'.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, however, Heidegger is interested only in the fact *that* fear is conditioned upon being-in-the-world, i.e., so that it might be set apart from the phenomenon of anxiety. Thus while Heidegger provides an adequate analysis of the manner in which fear is actually played out in existence – i.e., as the always pressing forward and drawing near of the *malum futurum*, the 'impending onslaught', etc. – he has hardly anything to say about the fearsomeness of the fearsome, that wherein its detrimentality actually resides. Certainly the detrimental is always detrimental for being-in-the-world itself, but this does not establish anything as to its detrimental-character. The most that Heidegger can offer here is that the fearsome has something 'eerie', *geheuer*, about it.<sup>17</sup> But what binds the totality of the feared into the unity of the fearsome as such? What must be the case such that being-in-the-world can first feel threatened by that which

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<sup>15</sup> GA 20, 397/287. Cf. GA 2, 188/180. Thus there is nothing like fear in pure being-in-the-earth; the purely living being's negotiation of the incompatible is not a being *afraid* of the incompatible, i.e., as that which must be 'survived' in order to preserve 'life'.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 395/285f. Cf. GA 2, 186/179.

<sup>17</sup> GA 2, 187/179.

presses forward and draws near? How must things stand with being-in-the-world in order for it *simply to be able* to perceive that it is 'insufficient to cope with the threatening thing'<sup>18</sup> (the live grenade, for example)? From our perspective, the problem of the fearsomeness of the fearsome eludes Heidegger just insofar as it cannot be posed within the remit of existence exclusively. In other words, the horizon of the fearsome's own peculiar meaningfulness, viz., detrimentality, is life, being-in-the-earth. Fear arises whenever I am exposed to something that threatens to deprive me of my 'life' by stripping me of my capacity to submit to the obligation to pursue – that is, threatens to reduce my living body to a corpse. The ontological ground of this fearsomeness is what we have previously defined as the earth's withholding of compatibles and throwing out of provocations in the form of incompatibles. It is being-in-the-earth itself in its thwarting, provocative character that takes on the quality of detrimentality for a 'there' concerned for its own self-preservation. For this reason, just as we suggested that death qua being-toward-the-end should be grounded in the event of death as the experience of the corpse, so too here it seems highly unlikely, perhaps impossible, that fear could be grounded in anxiety, as Heidegger thinks.<sup>19</sup> A pure existent, were such an entity possible at all, could

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<sup>18</sup> GA 20, 396f./287.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, 393/284: 'Dread [*Angst*] is not a mode of fear. Rather, it

perhaps be 'afraid' for its 'there' in some abstract sense, just as one could perhaps enumerate certain purely intraworldly sorts of 'fear' (the analogues of worldly 'needs'), but this fear could never be a fear of the imminently detrimental insofar as the ground of detrimentality itself would be disqualified *a priori*.

## II. Need, labour and technology

When we consider living existence in and for itself, the way in which it has its own being at issue for it, we see that it has an inherently schizoid nature, is always already estranged from itself. Its life proper, the being-in-the-earth that forms an essential part of its ontological make-up, comes to appear simultaneously as a constriction of its potentiality-for-being submission to which is necessary for survival and as a kind of enemy conspiring to undermine this very same survival, i.e., as something detrimental and hence fearsome. From the point of view of 'life', life is always apprehended as falling somewhere on a spectrum

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is the other way around: *All fear finds its ground in dread.*' Cf. GA 2, 247/230: *'The turning-away of falling is grounded rather in anxiety [Angst], which in turn is what first makes fear possible.'* Also 252/234: *'Fear is anxiety fallen into the "world", inauthentic and, as such, hidden from itself.'*

ranging from hardship and compulsion to open hostility and detrimentality. Life, in other words, is never perceived *as life*, but only ever as the antagonist of 'life'. For this reason a certain antipathy, even *resentment*, toward life arises; life is what holds 'life' back, prevents it from attaining full self-realization, from becoming what it most truly and essentially *is* – viz., *pure potentiality, absolute freedom-for-being*. The conspicuousness of life only enhances the sense of freedom of 'life' insofar as it reveals it to be limited and constantly under attack; it is amplified in an anticipatory longing arising out of an intuition of its own failure to attain realization.

Now it is precisely in this context, i.e., of the natural antipathy toward life that wells up from out of the very make-up of living existence, that I wish to suggest we might begin to raise anew the *question* concerning the ground and essence of technology. For just here it seems to me we have an opportunity to bracket all reflection involving the withdrawal, abandonment and oblivion of Being (or more precisely, of that *something*, whatever it 'is', that we have agreed to call 'Being') and to think the origin of technology phenomenologically,<sup>20</sup> that is, in such a

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<sup>20</sup> For example, from GA 54, 128/86: '[T]echnology understood as modern, i.e., as the technology of power machines, is itself already a *consequence* and not the *foundation* of a transformation of the relation of Being to man. Modern mechanical technology is the "metaphysical"

way that we remain within the ambit of the human yet without falling back thereby into the very *humanism* the thinking of Being was itself meant to transcend. In other words, this renewed appeal to the human is not of the sort that would draw its inspiration from the suzerainty of the human will – from the ‘delusion’ by which man ‘exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth’, such that ‘everywhere and always [he] encounters only himself’<sup>21</sup> – but rather, just to the contrary, is one that would expose a massive rift lurking at the heart of the human way to be itself. For if there is anything like an ‘abyss’ separating life from existence, it is an abyss that lies, not between the human and the animal, but only between two facets of our own being. *The human is separated from itself by an abyss.* And it is precisely from out of *this* abyss – not the *Ab-grund* of Being as *Er-ignis* but of the human itself in the self-alienation of living existence – that a radically different origin and sense of technology begin to take shape. Let us try, then, in the remainder of this chapter, to sketch out this origin and sense as clearly as possible.

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instrumentarium of such a transformation, referring back to a hidden essence of technology that encompasses what the Greeks already called τέχνη. Perhaps the transformed relation of Being to man, appearing in technology, is of such a kind that Being has withdrawn itself from man and modern man has been plunged into an eminent oblivion of Being.’

<sup>21</sup> GA 7, 28/QCT, 27.

## A. Labour and the strife

Because Heidegger interprets the origin and essence of technology out of the abandonment and oblivion of Being, there arises a rather severe interpretive dilemma that a more human-oriented approach should strive to resolve. Heidegger is clear as to how technology actually functions vis-à-vis beings, the whole of 'nature':

[M]odern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew.<sup>22</sup>

And yet, insofar as this mass unlocking, extracting, storing and distributing of nature is achieved, not by any merely human doing or making, but rather, to the contrary, through a prior and autonomous 'revealing', *Entbergen* – viz., an 'en-framing', *Ge-stell*, as a 'challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as inventory [*Bestand*]'<sup>23</sup> – it follows that there is no real end or goal to such

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 17/16.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20/19. The human is not the agent but only the executor of this

challenging activity outside of the challenging claim itself; indeed this is all the more strange inasmuch as it is precisely this claim that gives rise to the means-end distinction in the first place.<sup>24</sup> Enframing, in other words, is a closed circuit, totally self-referential; it admits of no further explanation:

Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about

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enframing: 'Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this ordering revealing happen' (18/18).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7f./4f. Here we must be careful. It is one thing to maintain that technology *qua* *destining of Being* is not a means to an end, even while this destining is held to be the origin of the modern obsession with means-ends thinking; a sending or destining of Being is nothing more or less than a worlding of the world. But it does not follow from this that the mass extracting and manipulating of nature itself should have no end or purpose, for in that case technology would amount to nothing more than pure means-ends calculation and such calculation would remain locked entirely within itself. It would be as though humanity had been gripped with a fever to order everything in terms of means and ends without this activity having anything actually to achieve beyond the fever's simply running its course.

are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing become the chief characteristics of the challenging-revealing.

For example:

The coal that has been hauled out in some mining district has not been supplied in order that it may simply be present somewhere or other. It is stockpiled; that is, it is on call, ready to deliver the sun's warmth that is stored in it. The sun's warmth is challenged forth for heat, which in turn is ordered to deliver steam whose pressure turns the wheels that keep a factory running.<sup>25</sup>

Here we are naturally inclined to ask about the *actual human relations* linking the storing of the coal's energy to the unlocking of the sun's warmth, or the powering of the factory to the particular kinds of commodities the factory produces or the logic of such production. But this would get us nowhere, for stockpiling is an end in itself; its 'for the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16f./15f.



sake of' is nothing but further stockpiling: 'Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.'<sup>26</sup> In this way technology has an aura of 'ambiguity' (*Zweideutigkeit*), even 'mystery' (*Geheimnis*) about it<sup>27</sup>; if it is undeniably 'monstrous' (*ungeheuer*) in its

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 17/17. It is the same with certainty, willing and all the rest. Certainty is the 'as-certaining' of ever more certainty: 'In this epoch...certitude [*Sicherheit*] in the sense of unconditional certainty [*Gewißheit*] counts as what is most valuable, and therefore ascertaining [*das Sichern*] becomes the basic character of all comportment. Ascertaining is not merely subsequent corroboration but is rather the aggressive making secure [*Sicherstellen*] in advance for the sake of certitude [*Sicherheit*]' (GA 54, 190/128). Likewise, the will wills only the constancy of its own willing: 'The will to power is that will which wills *itself*' (GA 9, 241/312). Even research has no higher aim. Thus 'when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving', this is not in order to accomplish something that is relevant to the researcher himself as a human being, but only because 'he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research', i.e., because the world is pre-given to him as mere stuff-to-be-researched (GA 7, 19/QCT, 19).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34/33: 'When we look into the ambiguous essence of technology,

destructiveness, it is nonetheless at bottom a kind of 'aimless activity', nothing but the filling up of the lack left by Being's self-retreat.<sup>28</sup>

But is this really all that can be said about stockpiling, hoarding, ascertaining, ordering, securing and the rest? Is our obsessive hoarding and arranging of nature due simply to the fact that beings appear to us as the 'to-be-hoarded' and 'to-be-arranged'? In other words, can we perhaps think the 'means/end' distinction itself in a more ontologically adequate and grounding way, think the ontological origin of this

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we behold the constellation [of truth], the stellar course of the mystery.'

<sup>28</sup> GA 7, 94/EP, 106f.: 'The consumption of all materials, including the raw material "man", for the unconditioned possibility of the production of everything is determined in a concealed way by the complete emptiness in which beings, the materials of what is real, are suspended. This emptiness has to be filled up. But since the emptiness of Being can never be filled up by the fullness of beings, especially when this emptiness can never be experienced as such, the only way to escape it is incessantly to arrange beings in the constant possibility of being ordered as the form of guaranteeing aimless activity. Viewed in this way, technology is the organization of a lack, since it is related to the emptiness of Being contrary to its knowledge. Everywhere where there are not enough beings...technology has to jump in, create a substitute, and consume raw materials.'

distinction itself, i.e., such that technology is reduced neither to a mere practical contrivance, an *instrumentum*, nor to a self-referential corollary of the abandonment and forgetting of Being? And is this way not precisely one that points in the direction of the very life that Heidegger refuses to acknowledge as definitive of our human essence?

On the basis of what we have already established, the origin and meaning of enframing are not difficult to comprehend. We have seen that because life is given to 'life' as a necessary and fearsome compulsion, a hostile and alien power, there naturally arises in living existence a desire to do away with this power once and for all and thereby to realize fully its ownmost being-free-for. Accordingly, being-in-the-earth appears to living existence as that which must be *resisted*, that from whose clutches 'life' must be rescued, secured and protected. Let us now define this rescuing, securing and protecting as *labour*. By labour we intend *the whole of the means of resistance against life in the battle to emancipate and secure 'life'*. The *battle* to emancipate and secure life: this denotes the fact that labour, insofar as detrimentality has its origin in the ur-strife immanent to pure life (i.e., in the pursuit of compatibles and negotiation of incompatibles), amounts to the instigation of a *strife against the ur-strife* as at once a neutralization of the necessity of pursuit and an emasculating counter-provoking of the earth that deprives the earth of its power to challenge and assail, separates the earth from what it can do. We may then say that enframing, so far from referring back to

nothing but itself, is rather the *modus operandi* of labour as resistance against life. This does not mean that labour is somehow more primordial than enframing; rather labour denotes the concrete implementation of enframing, the actual technological carrying out of the liberation of 'life'. Our definition of labour thus contradicts the one that has held sway since antiquity, viz., as any activity that serves to provide for the necessities of life and thus to ensure survival. Labour is not, as Sartre calls it, 'the original *praxis* by which man produces and reproduces his life',<sup>29</sup> but rather just the opposite: labour is the striving of the strife against the ur-strife of life in an effort *to do away with life* once and for all. And it is precisely for *this* reason that labour itself is always seen in the natural attitude as need, obligation, hardship – i.e., not because it is necessary for survival, but rather because it is the necessary means of eradicating survival. Labour is the burden of over-

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, Alan Sheridan-Smith (tr.), *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol. 1* (London: Verso, 2004), 90. On the perception of labour from antiquity to Marx, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 79ff. It is worth noting that Arendt herself agrees with this definition of labour, viz., as that which 'assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species' (8), and is concerned only with the proper place and role of this survival-activity in the total *vita activa* and the right attitude toward it.

coming the burden of survival. Therefore labour is always inherently geared toward its own eventual self-overcoming: in labouring (striving) to neutralize the ur-strife of life, the human simultaneously aims to neutralize labour itself. The need to labour vanishes with the vanishing of the needs and necessities of life.<sup>30</sup>

But how does enframing actually neutralize life and disempower the earth? What do stockpiling, inventorying, organizing and the like achieve concretely? How is security actually realized?

Let us here refer to the end or 'telos' of enframing as *accumulation*. By this we mean something essentially distinct from any mere storing up or stashing away. Animals stash things away, but no animal accumulates in the proper sense. Wherein lies the difference? If labour were nothing more than a stashing away, this would perhaps be sufficient for survival. But labour, we said, is interested not in survival but in the negation of survival, that is, of the compulsion to submit to survival. Mere storing up only *perpetuates* survival, ensures continual adherence to the mandate of survival. Storing up leaves the earth-'life' power imbalance fully intact; it not only takes its toll on the body but also leaves the earth the leeway for a further provocation, prompting

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<sup>30</sup> Thus the human is not the best-adapted living being but rather just the opposite: it is the being that succeeds, through labour, in neutralizing the need to adapt.

yet more storing – both of which hasten the inevitable interruption of pursuit and the event of becoming-a-corpse. In order for labour to break free of the cycle of storing – provocation – storing, it is necessary for it to put away something *extra* – a *surplus*. Accumulation is the dual process by which labour stores up and puts at the ready *more than what is necessary for mere survival, and precisely with the aim of pre-satisfying a future pursuit and pre-empting a future provocation*. Ontologically speaking, *all labour is already surplus labour*.<sup>31</sup> Accumulation, in other

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<sup>31</sup> Thus when Proudhon ‘posits as an axiom’, to the great irritation of Marx, that ‘all work leaves a surplus’, we should have to admit that Proudhon is quite right despite himself, that is, as long as the whole business is no longer framed in terms of *value* (in which case it is indeed senseless). But when we say that all labour is essentially surplus labour, we do not mean this in the merely ontic (and trivial) sense that human beings tend to work longer than what is required for their subsistence, nor even that, under specifically capitalist relations of production, labour is compelled to prolong itself beyond the point at which it has succeeded in producing the value of the means of its own reproduction and perpetuation. Rather we mean it in the specifically *ontological* sense, in a way that posits the very being of labour as such – viz., that *labour itself just is* the production of a surplus, that there is no act of labour which is not already a surplus-generating act, an *interest-accruing* act,

words, brings a stockpile of compatibles within easy and immediate reach so as to (1) negate a *perceived* necessity of action or interpretation (when the compatible-being is ready to hand, comportment stays at the periphery of the relevant orbit of concern); (2) release the body from a future obligation to pursue, preserving its integrity; and (3) deprive the earth of a measure of its capacity to force a new pursuit or to turn or thwart an ongoing pursuit by means of some spontaneous withdrawal, densification or provocation.

We must therefore disagree with Marx when he argues that the distinction between animal 'labour' and labour proper is that the latter is pre-conceived:

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour

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that 'surplus-production' denotes the very labour-*character* of labour qua labour, the *logic* of labour as this particular species of act (where 'surplus' is thought in terms of the *ultimate end* of neutralizing life by producing and storing up more than what is necessary for mere survival). See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 641.

process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally.<sup>32</sup>

In fact this idea that human labour is distinguished from animal activity by the addition of conscious planning is a virtual tautology, for insofar as consciousness – here meaning the capacity for free, anticipatory projection, or simply, being-for-itself – just *is* the very being of the human, the formula demonstrates little more than that human labour is distinguished by the fact that it is human. But the real question is the one that arises on the basis of this fact – namely this: in what way is such activity *fundamentally transformed* by the addition of human freedom in the (ontic) form of conscious planning? For as it happens, projection alters not simply the range of activity available but indeed the very logic of the activity itself, and it is this new logic that stamps the activity for the first time with the character of *labour as such*. The architect is distinguished from the honeybee *not* in that his dwelling is *merely* designed but rather in that it is designed always and specifically for the purpose of an *outlasting* as a kind of calculated prevention.

For the same reason, this is also precisely the point at which Arendt's distinction between work and labour ultimately collapses. Because Arendt understands labour as the means of perpetuating rather

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<sup>32</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 284.



than of overcoming survival – ‘[The] productivity of labour power... never “produces” anything but life’<sup>33</sup> – she does not see that every product of labour has the same *quality* if not the same *quantity* of permanence. Arendt insists that ‘the mark of all labouring [is] that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent’, or again that the products of labour ‘do not stay in the world long enough to become part of it’.<sup>34</sup> But this is to regard the human as ontologically identical to an animal or plant that purely lives, i.e., as a pure being-in-the-earth; it is to confuse the ur-strife of life with the strife of living existence. Even the most rudimentary labour is already ‘work’ in Arendt’s sense inasmuch as it takes back, by means of accumulation, a bit of the earth’s power to assail and provoke. There is only a difference of *degree* between a loaf of bread and the table on which it is served (i.e., in terms of their temporal continuity: the table is relatively more permanent), whereas there is a difference of kind or *essence* between a loaf of bread and the animal’s nuts and berries which it gathers and stores up for mere survival, or between the animal’s nest or den and the most primitive and ramshackle human dwelling.

As a storing-extra and making-available geared toward the

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<sup>33</sup> Arendt, op. cit., 88.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 87, 118.

nullification of life and not merely toward the perpetual repetition of storing itself ('being on call for a further ordering'), enframing qua accumulation is seen to be a *making-convenient*, a process of *conveniencization*. As accumulation labour aims for a saturation of the field with compatibles that, in their readiness-to-hand, assume the form of instant gratifications. In this way technology assembles a *zone of convenience* as an eclipsing of the earth-zone to a degree commensurate with its own level of realization. That is, the greater the zone of convenience, the greater the shrinkage of the earth-dimension of the world-earth and thus the closer the approximation of the field itself to a pure world (i.e., such that the total and final disqualification of being-in-the-earth would correspond to, and indeed would depend on, the establishment of an absolutely pure world as a zone of absolute convenience).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Heidegger was well aware of the phenomena of convenience and 'the easy' (*das Leichte*) from early on. Thus in WS 1921-2 he writes: 'Factual life is always seeking the easy way [*Erleichterung*]; inclination follows the direction in which it is pulled and does so by itself, readily... Mundane difficulties are actually ways to take our ease. Along with convenience, life at the same time seeks the assurance that nothing can be closed off to it...Living is caring and indeed is so in the inclination toward making things easy for oneself, in the inclination toward flight

The worldification of the earth in the sense of the assembling of a zone of relative convenience through accumulation clearly entails a concomitant transformation of the spatiality and temporality of living existence. In the last chapter we said that the placement of places always and necessarily has something to do with the relative likelihood of pure life's encountering compatibles and incompatibles, and further, that this likelihood was the index of distance. The phenomenon of accumulation qua conveniencization now emerges as the logic of this placement: for living existence in and for itself, the space of the world-earth is always organized in such a way as to maximize the availability of potential gratifications while minimizing the presence of potential provocations. It is not simply that everything has its own place within a region of significance, but rather that these places and regions themselves are pre-given and assembled with an eye to convenience. Labour accumulates in the way it seizes the dynamic, perpetually warping and twisting space of life and tames it, smoothens it out and homogenizes it, tidily carves it up into discrete sectors wherein compatibles and their means

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[i.e., from factual life itself]' (GA 61, 108/81). But insofar as this is still a thoroughly intraworldly sort of convenience, the way in which the connection between life's 'inclination toward making things easy' for itself and its seeking assurances that 'nothing can be closed off to it' is based in *life* is absent.

of procurement are never very far out of reach. This process of the conveniencization of space is what lies at the root of that 'frenzy for nearness' that Heidegger saw very early on.<sup>36</sup> By bringing a stock of things close by and ready to hand, living existence regulates and standardizes its zones of relative affinity, ensconces itself within a matrix of affinity that accompanies it whenever and wherever it goes.

Much the same can be said of the conveniencization of time. By means of accumulation, labour neutralizes those times of affinity where projection is drawn back into the urgency of the present, thereby pushing the horizon of potentiality ever further into the future. The constancy of pursuit dwindles as the earth is shorn of its familiar rhythms and cycles, while the earth's spontaneous assaults grow ever more sporadic, there being fewer and fewer possibilities for their realization. And yet, ironically, this radical de-contracting and extending of the horizon of projection is possible only through the equally radical making-present achieved through enframing. The degree of presence of the stock corresponds to the degree of efficiency of procurement, to its quality of instantaneity, of always guaranteeing immediate

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<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., GA 20 (1925), 312/227: 'All the increases in velocity...involve the overcoming of distances. This peculiar overcoming of distances is in its structure of being...a frenzy for nearness, which in its being is based in Dasein itself.'

gratifications; the index of convenience is nothing more than the rapidity of the nullifying response to even the faintest stirrings of life.

Such, then, is the actual logic of enframing when thought on the basis of life. But we must also take into account the means by which accumulation is really carried out, that is, the whole of the concrete material embodiment of enframing – tools, gear, devices, machines, appliances, structures, etc., what we are familiar with as equipment, implements, the whole of the ‘work-world’ in the most general sense – insofar as this constitutes, just as it does in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (as we have already seen above), the site or focal point of the strife. There are two things to say about this, briefly. For one thing, and most generally, the nature of the work-world is necessarily such as to make it suitable, not for any random project or task that crops up, but primarily and specifically for those projects geared toward the neutralization of earthly life through the creation of a zone of relative convenience. The hammer is for hammering nails into slats, which are used to build dwellings that keep out the rain, wind and cold. Tracks are laid for railway networks that facilitate the transport of goods and provisions to be made available for instant consumption. Indeed Heidegger himself is abundantly clear on this point:

In the roads, bridges, rails, road signs, and similar installations, the world as nature and earth is constantly being made a concern. A

covered railway platform takes the weather, stormy weather, into account. Public lighting, a simple streetlamp, takes darkness, the specific change over to the absence of daylight and the sun, into account...In all of this something is present, something is taken into account specifically with regard to its detrimentality [*Abträglichkeit*], insofar as it is threatening, obstructive, unserviceable, resistant.<sup>37</sup>

Here the work-world is called into being and deployed precisely in order to combat 'the world as nature and earth' – the environing world, *Umwelt* – in its detrimental, recalcitrant, fearsome, etc. character. How this combating is factually or ontically prosecuted is irrelevant, insofar as this depends on the ontical configuration of the particular world-earth itself. The point is simply that, *ontologically* considered, every work-world is, at least to a degree, necessarily structured in this way, that is, oriented toward the detrimentality of life.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 269f./198.

<sup>38</sup> Again we must disagree with Arendt on this point. In her view, although tools and implements 'ease pain and effort and thereby change the modes in which the urgent necessity in labour was once manifest to all', nonetheless they have 'not eliminated compulsion from the labouring activity or the condition of being subject to need and necessity from human life' (op. cit., 125, 121). Precisely to the contrary,

The second point has to do with the relationship of the work-world to the body. If accumulation fortifies and protects the body by postponing pursuit and emasculating the earth, then this is achieved through the displacement of the site of the encounter with the earth from the body to equipment. In this way the utilization of equipment is equivalent to the creation of a surrogate or 'prosthetic' body; by labouring and absorbing the earth's assaults in its stead, equipment rejuvenates the body by preserving and restoring its original smoothness and slipperiness, erasing old marks and inscriptions and preventing the emergence of new ones (a coat protects the skin from frostbite, thus is a prosthetic skin). In this way living existence builds up, expands and enhances its zone of convenience through a strategy of constant self-improvement qua self-prosthetization. Technology is always a process of 'existentializing' or 'worldifying', therefore of 'devitalizing', the body by supplementing it with an ever-swelling agglomeration of pieces, parts, extensions, additions, etc.; the living-existing body is always prosthethized in direct proportion to the level of accumulation attained.<sup>39</sup>

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this is the sole *raison d'être* of equipment.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Bergson on the concept of the organ: '[All] the elementary forces of the intellect tend to transform matter into an instrument of action, that is, in the etymological sense of the word, into an *organ*. Life,

## B. Implications of a life-based theory of technology

For Heidegger, technology is bound up with the very destiny of the West; it is not a distinct historical period or 'epoch' so much as the way in which history historicizes itself as the history of the abandonment of Being. Hence there was never a time (e.g., in some ancient past) when Western humanity was not yet separated from its origin, not yet estranged from Being, which is to say, not yet already delivered over to and under the sway of technological domination, '*Machenschaft*', in some way and to some degree.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, however, what we are familiar with as specifically modern technology does entail

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not content with producing organisms, would fain give them as an appendage inorganic matter itself, converted into an immense organ by the industry of the living being. Such is the initial task it assigns to intelligence' (op. cit., 161). Here the manufactured tool is also supplementary to the body, i.e., an 'appendage' of matter.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., GA 6.2, 446/EP, 80f.: 'The surrender in which Being abandons itself to the utmost deformation of essence of beingness (to "machination") is in a hidden way the self-suspension of the primal essence of Appropriation in the Origin...[Thus the] progression of Being to beingness is that history of Being...which remains just as essentially remote from the Origin in its start as in its finish.'



something new, a radical break or transformation, insofar as it marks the completion or consummation of this historizing, its arriving into the fullness of its own self-realization. And it is precisely for this reason that it is possible to set modern technology apart on the basis of the particular kind of 'revealing' that occurs through this realization: 'a challenging-forth [*Herausfordern*] that puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such' for the purpose of 'driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense'.<sup>41</sup> The amassing and systematic ordering and distributing of all beings as inventory is always achieved through this extracting and storing up of raw energy, which in turn is to be expended, consumed, for the purpose of ever more ordering and distributing and thus ever more extracting, storing up, etc.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> GA 7, 15, 16/QCT, 14, 15.

<sup>42</sup> This is not as naïve a problematization as it might at first appear. It is not as though Heidegger is ignorant of the logic of capital; it is rather that he is not convinced that the logic of capital is not *itself* merely an expression – i.e., the final expression, the culmination – of a much more ancient and fundamental logic governing the whole destiny of the West from the beginning, i.e., that 'driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense' is not in fact the last iteration of a much deeper obsession with ordering, controlling, ascertaining – in a word, *securing*.

This characteristic of extraction for the sake of storing and consumption of the stored for the sake of more extraction is what allows us to distinguish the modern wind turbine from the old windmill, the coalmine from the peasant's field, the hydroelectric power plant from 'the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years'. The windmill's sails 'do indeed turn in the wind', but this turning is 'left entirely to the wind's blowing'; unlike the wind turbine, 'the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it'. In the same way, '[the] field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order [*bestellte*] appears differently than it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and to maintain'; the peasant 'does not challenge the soil of the field' but rather 'places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase'. By contrast, industrialized agriculture challenges the earth to yield cash crops for the food industry, just as with the strip mine 'a tract of land is challenged into the putting out of coal and ore'.<sup>43</sup>

It must be admitted that these are somewhat dubious distinctions even on Heidegger's own model. Is not agriculture *as such* a kind of challenging and compelling of the earth to yield up things it would not normally yield up (it is certainly not any 'letting-the-earth-be')? Has not the forest always been seen as a timber-field just insofar as it has always

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<sup>43</sup> GA 7, 15ff./QCT, 14ff.

been necessary to build shelters and consume fuel? Has not the river always given itself as a shipping route for the transport of cargo? At the other extreme, and in just the opposite way, it is today becoming increasingly possible to extract, store and manipulate the forces of nature precisely in such a way that they are not violently challenged and driven into submission but are rather allowed to carry on at their ease.<sup>44</sup> Indeed the turning of the blades of the wind turbine is also, exactly like the old windmill, 'left entirely to the wind's blowing'. Wherein lies the difference between a revealing that challenges nature for some definite end and one for which challenging itself is the end, or conversely, between an intervening that is nonetheless a kind of caring and preserving and an all-out challenging that is no longer an intervening but actually a kind of 'letting-be'?

In any case, irrespective of whether we accept Heidegger's definition, it is abundantly clear that no such distinction can legitimately be drawn when we think the meaning of technology out of the strife of

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<sup>44</sup> This is the real but hardly pondered meaning of the contemporary infatuation with 'sustainability': viz., the quest for a form of exploitation whose permanence arises from the fact that it does not pillage and despoil nature but rather leaves it more pristine than when it began, and thus for a nature that reproduces itself and offers itself freely in the very act – clinical, civilized – of its ransacking.

living existence. For in this case technology is realized at the very beginning of human history in labour; it is as old as the human itself inasmuch as the human is born out of its primal agon with the earth. Even the humblest device – Heidegger’s jug, for example – is already technological. The essence of this ‘thing’ is to hold, to store up. Not *merely* to store up, however, but rather to *accumulate*, to store up not only what is necessary for an impending pursuit but also for a series of pursuits extending into an indefinite future. Every vessel stores up a surplus, and it is this surplus that distinguishes the vessel from, say, the camel’s hump or the pelican’s pouch. The hump and the pouch store what is necessary for survival; the jug stores in such a way as to nullify the need to survive, i.e., by making a stock of satisfaction or gratification ready to hand, bringing it close by for instant and recurring disposal. In this way the vessel does not simply quench the thirst, but in fact prevents genuine thirst from ever arising. For thirst, properly understood, is only truly thirst in the midst of the pursuit of the compatible out toward which the thirst itself is already directed. Really and truly to thirst is to be on the hunt for..., i.e., for that which constitutes the *intentum* of the thirst-pursuit itself. The mere inkling of discomfort we feel in our throat, and which is instantaneously neutralized by the simple stretching out of our hand or the turning of our wrist, the simple act of pouring a drink, is not thirst, but only the faintest intimation of thirst, a vitiated and atrophied desire that has been solved, conquered,

long in advance – a simple announcement that it is once again time to tap into our vast reserves.

Let us take another example: that ‘old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years’. The hydroelectric plant puts the river at our command and transforms it into a water-power supplier; the old wooden bridge, in contrast, lets the river be, leaves it free to flow along in peace and without interruption. Moreover, it is just this letting the river run its natural course that functions to ‘gather’ the bridge’s surroundings into a unified and coherent landscape. As Heidegger says in ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’:

The bridge swings over the stream ‘with ease and power’. It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighbourhood. The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> GA 7, 154/PLT, 152.

This gathering is itself that which creates something like a 'site' or 'location', i.e., for the play of the world. The location does not precede the bridge but is rather co-produced along with it; the building of the bridge is the coming into existence of the location:

To be sure, the bridge is a thing of its *own* kind; for it gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a *site* for it. But only something *that is itself a location* can make space for a site. The location is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a location, and does so *because of the bridge*. Thus the bridge does not come to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.<sup>46</sup>

Now the only way one can hold fast to both of these positions – (1) that the bridge does nothing to the river but simply lets it run its course, i.e., does not 'challenge' the river in any way, and (2) that the bridge itself determines its own location – is by suspending or disregarding the constituting force and role of life. For not only does the bridge – and not only the modern superhighway bridge but indeed the bridge *qua bridge* – challenge the river in a fundamental way, but it is precisely this

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 156/154.

challenging that *annuls* the location that called the bridge into being in the first place.

If one supposes that locations arise spontaneously and simultaneously with the building of buildings that, qua buildings, provide sites, then there is no 'reason' for building the bridge in the first place, or indeed for building it here rather than there. It is as if a bridge 'were built', just so happened to be built, and only then, subsequent to its completion, were discovered to possess some specificity or particularity. Now it is perfectly true that there are many spots along a virgin stream that may be occupied by a bridge. But it is only because one of them *already* proves *suitable* as a location, i.e., reveals itself as a location, that the bridge is built *there*, at *that location* and not some other, and indeed, that a *bridge* is built there and not, say, a shelter or a lookout. It is the location itself that determines these things (likewise with the shelter, etc.). But what determines the locations? Nothing but life itself! It is so far from being the case that the bridge illuminates the banks as banks and causes them to lie across from each other that in fact we should have to say exactly the opposite: viz., that the bridge is always and essentially a technological negotiation of banks that have become banks vis-à-vis a river that has revealed itself *as an obstacle*, that is, 'specifically with regard to its detrimentality', as Heidegger says in SS 1925. The banks become banks just when the river *needs to be crossed*, and this 'needing to be crossed' itself is disclosed only in the context of some

discrete cycle of pursuit. Moreover, it is only from out of pursuit that the banks reveal some *particular* place to be a location: there is something to be had on *that side*, from *right here* to *over there*. On Heidegger's view, we should have to assume that whatever is to be obtained is only ever given after the building of the means of obtaining it.

Pursuit exposes the river as an obstacle, a challenge thrown down by the earth in its attempt to thwart pursuit – i.e., as a threat to 'life', something that must be 'survived'. In this threatening challenge discharged by the earth via the river, the banks are first set off one from the other as the end points of a distance that must be negotiated; a 'near' and 'far' emerge as zones of relative danger and security. The delimiting of these zones provides a range of sites for a possible bridging. The bridge itself cancels these zones by annulling the distance between them, 'gathering' the banks by homogenizing and flattening the landscape into a matrix of stable positions and intervals. What is more, this annulling and flattening do not occur only once or every so often; rather the bridge annuls for as long as it bridges. The bridge calmly and efficiently extracts the obstacle and quietly dispenses with the banks – and along with it the need to negotiate the river, to survive it. The river now becomes 'scenic'. One no longer 'crosses' it, strictly speaking, for there is no longer anything to cross; henceforth one simply *goes over* it, avoids it altogether.

Precisely to this extent is the earth disempowered and denatured;



some agency, strategy or weapon of the earth has been deflected, rendered impotent. Whatever lies *over there* is made readily and constantly available, brought close to hand; it is neither on this side nor on that, for the sides themselves have vanished along with the river itself qua provocation. Only an even more violent response by the earth (e.g., a storm that wrecks the bridge) can shatter the peace and security of this homogenized and de-distanced realm and open up the river as a provocation once more.

It is the bridge itself that accomplishes this neutralizing accumulating of that out toward which the bridge extends. It is not a function of a specifically 'modern' type of bridge; the 'old stone bridge's humble brook crossing' that 'gives to the harvest wagon its passage from the fields into the village and carries the lumber cart from the field path to the road' is indistinguishable in this respect (i.e., ontologically) from the 'highway bridge [that] is tied into the network of long-distance traffic'.<sup>47</sup> It is true that the old peasant bridge is not built with an eye to driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense or to ordering things about simply so that they can stand at the ready for more ordering. But every bridge qua bridge accumulates through a disempowering of the earth in the nullification of something detrimental. Physical procurement is unnecessary, since the bridge itself has already guaranteed this;

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 154f./152.

indeed the function of the bridge is to extend the entire domain of gratification, the zone of convenience, out to the site of the pursued itself. The bridge does not facilitate the return of the pursued to a smaller, self-contained zone of convenience beyond which it presently lies, but rather takes the full zone of convenience out to the pursued itself and enfolds it within it.

In this gathering-enfolding lies the bridge's technological character as interpreted from the perspective of life. Labour is the building that realizes this character and thereby achieves concretely the bridge's enfolding function. In this way the bridge not only accomplishes the stockpiling of the pursued but is itself a kind of stockpile, namely, of the labour through which it was created (in the double sense that the labour is embodied in the bridge *and* that some further, potential labour is pre-nullified by being stored up in the labour of the building of the bridge itself).

### III. Conclusion: a note on Descartes

For Heidegger, as we know, Cartesian philosophy marks the point at which the human discovers and attains the particular kind of freedom that accords most authentically with its historical destiny – i.e., as the *ego cogito (ergo) sum*, the self-certainty by and through which the ego stands over and against the world as 'the collective image of

representing production'.<sup>48</sup> For this reason, Heidegger argues, Cartesian philosophy is the most brilliant expression of the inauguration of a new and largely disastrous world-epoch within this historical destiny itself: viz., modernity proper as the age in which 'humanity sets in motion, with respect to everything, the unlimited process of calculation, planning, and breeding', i.e., the age of 'planetary imperialism', of the human being's 'total, i.e., technological, dominion over the earth'.<sup>49</sup> The securing of the human in the freedom of its own self-certainty has as its natural corollary the deterioration of the world to the status of the pure 'domain of measuring and execution for the purpose of the mastery of beings as a whole'.<sup>50</sup>

Here again we see clearly that, on Heidegger's interpretation, world mastery and world domination are nothing more than empty functions – in this case, of the apotheosis of the *subiectum* in the figure of the *ego cogito*: when the subject arrives into the self-certainty of the 'I think', domination follows as a matter of course. Now it is certainly true that Descartes longs for the arrival of an age of exhaustive mastery over nature. For example, in the 'Discourse on the Method' he writes that the various observations and discoveries that he has made in the natural

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<sup>48</sup> GA 5, 94/71.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Cf. 111/84.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 92/69.

sciences have

opened my eyes to the possibility of gaining knowledge which would be very useful in life, and of discovering a practical philosophy which might replace the speculative philosophy taught in the schools. Through this philosophy we could know the power and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all the other bodies in our environment, as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans; and we could use this knowledge – as the artisans use theirs – for all the purposes for which it is appropriate, and thus make ourselves, as it were, the lords and masters of nature.<sup>51</sup>

Crucially, however, the possibility and the allure of such mastery do not arise out of nowhere and for no reason, and by no means simply as the effect of a new way of understanding ourselves vis-à-vis nature, i.e., a new phase in the history of the forgetting of Being. Rather, as Descartes says, mastery over nature – as that ‘which would be very useful in life’ – is always and intimately bound up with that ‘law which obliges us to do all in our power to secure the general welfare of mankind’. What does ‘the general welfare of mankind’ which is to be secured signify in the

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<sup>51</sup> René Descartes, ‘Discourse on the Method’, in *Selected Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47.

context of this usefulness? On this point Descartes is absolutely clear:  
mastery over nature

is desirable not only for the invention of innumerable devices which would facilitate our enjoyment of the fruits of the earth and all the goods we find there, but also, and most importantly, for the maintenance of health, which is undoubtedly the chief good and the foundation of all the other goods in this life. For even the mind depends so much on the temperament and disposition of the bodily organs that if it is possible to find some means of making men in general wiser and more skilful than they have been up till now, I believe we must look for it in medicine. It is true that medicine as currently practiced does not contain much of any significant use; but without intending to disparage it, I am sure there is no one, even among its practitioners, who would not admit that all we know in medicine is almost nothing in comparison with what remains to be known, and that we might free ourselves from innumerable diseases, both of the body and of the mind, and perhaps even from the infirmity of old age, if we had sufficient knowledge of their causes and of all the remedies that nature has provided.

In short, mastery is justified, not for its own sake, not out of the arrogance of a thirst for domination and conquest, but rather as the

principal means of liberating us from, specifically, *aging and disease*. In other words, freedom is not found in pure self-certainty but in the *'health'* – that is, the unshackling of *'life'* from the regime of need and suffering – that mastery of nature makes possible by means of the *'useful knowledge'* of medicine. Such emancipation and guaranteeing of freedom in health as the neutralization of being-in-the-earth constitute the fulfilment of our collective obligation *'to secure the general welfare of mankind'* inasmuch as health contributes to the enhancement and spread of human wisdom.

## Five Conclusions

### I. Event

Life is the opening up of an earth as a zone of desire; existence is the opening up of a world as a zone of being. But existence never opens up, or has *never yet* opened up, without life; world has never yet emerged in its pure state, as the zone of the revealing and concealing of being and nothing besides. Rather the emergence of a world is always and essentially bound up with the rising up of an earth; the realm of being is always co-given with the realm of desire. We have argued that the emergence of being-understanding corresponds directly (i.e., by virtue of the ecstatic-projective temporality of understanding itself) to the apprehending of the desiring-realm as a realm of hardship and hostility, bare survival, the need to need; in this apprehension of need, the primal strife of world and earth is inaugurated.

As the coalescence of being-understanding and need-apprehension, i.e., as the entity that partakes of both world and earth simultaneously and equiprimordially, the human qua living existence is the interface or 'hyphen' of the strife. The enactment of this interface is realized in labour; living existence is born with labour as the inaugural counterassault against the (perceived) needs of life and the (perceived)

detrimentality of the life-zone. In labour the human deploys equipment to erect for itself a citadel of relative convenience, a world as a haven of peace, stability and tranquillity which disqualifies the need to need, secures freedom from survival and thereby steals back from the earth a measure, however slight, of its power to assail and provoke.

In the strife, all three *dramatis personae* – earth, world, human – arrive into their essences and become what they are. All find themselves in the strife, in the agon of provocation and counter-provocation – i.e., in their constitutional self-division and self-alienation. Earth emerges as the zone of detrimentality and need vis-à-vis a world that co-emerges as the fortress of freedom erected against this detrimentality; the world is always at once the zone of being and the zone of liberating convenience; for living existence, these two aspects of world can never be separated. Likewise, as the one in and for whom the zone of detrimentality and the zone of convenience are united in a single openness, the human is structurally alienated from itself, always already in the process of struggling to divest itself of an original aspect of itself, to be free from the other half of itself. There is no bad faith or self-loathing involved here; precisely to the contrary, this alienation, this ‘inauthenticity’, if you like, just *is* our ownmost ‘authentic’ human condition.

What we are describing here is a single movement, an ‘*Er-eignis*’, an event of co-appropriative arising, and indeed one that can be understood as entirely independent of the abandonment and forgetting of any



'Being'. Not *es gibt*, then, but rather '*it strives*' as the primal upsurge of the *it lives/worlds*. Here *it strives* = *it lives/worlds*, where the slash mark '/', being at once a mark of separation and of unification, signifies the originary conjoining of living and worlding in labour, i.e., in enframing accumulation.

## II. Process

This event, however, the primordial *it strives*, is not a one-off, something that occurs and is over and done with, but rather a process, a movement. For at the end of every discrete circuit of enframing-accumulation, every particular disenfranchisement of the earth, we are not confronted with two things, our former survival situation *and* a surplus, an excess disenfranchisement, i.e., some real, quantitative diminishment of insecurity; instead we are presented with a situation that, although factually novel, is identical *in form* to the previous one: viz., some concrete configuration of the alliance between the need to need and the threatening, provoking earth. In this way the process of labour-accumulation, of taking not merely enough for survival but rather always more than enough in order to nullify survival, is a process without end. As a movement of neutralization and securitization geared toward ever more and more efficient securitization, labour becomes, and in a manner perfectly analogous to capital, a kind of *perpetuum*

*mobile* or automatic subject.<sup>1</sup> The *it strives* resolves itself in nothing less than total self-contraction; it is a striving that aims for nothing short of the obliteration of all strife. Accordingly the *it strives* is such as to put the strife itself at stake in the very striving that it *is* essentially. The strife is always already turned toward the direction of non-strife – of rest, non-movement. The strife lacks balance, is ontologically biased in favour of *world*. As Heidegger says: it is ‘world which prevails from out of the relationship of existence to the unconcealment of Being’.<sup>2</sup> Hence living existence is not only alienated from itself, but also and just as primordially *in flight from itself*: the *it strives* is essentially a *being-toward-existence* as a *being-toward-the-world*, or conversely, a *being-away-from-life* as a *being-away-from-the-earth*. This movement toward the world is nothing accidental but stems from the very structure of the *it strives* itself. We may therefore agree with Heidegger when he writes: ‘The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence.’<sup>3</sup> This ‘threat’ to living existence is nothing less than that of its final self-obliteration in its own self-consummation; in other words, its realization, its becoming what it

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<sup>1</sup> Marx, op. cit. (1976), 255.

<sup>2</sup> GA 5, 63/47. We have already alluded to this above, 142ff.

<sup>3</sup> GA 7, 29/QCT, 28.

most really and truly *is* as a being-toward-the-world, is the *negation* of what it is *as* this very movement itself, the *it strives*. In order for living existence to *be* the *it strives* that it is, it must *also*, in that very movement itself, be a being-toward-the-negation-of-the-*it-strives* in the self-realization of the strife in and as pure being-in-the-world. In the simplest terms, the living existent *is* a movement (the *it strives*) that culminates in the negation (through purification) of that very movement itself.<sup>4</sup> For this reason we should have to say that the world is still in the process of formation, i.e., in the process of its realization through purification. Thus far only a partial world, a potential world.

It is only in this sense that we may (and indeed must) speak, along with Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Barbaras et al., of something like a horizon of unfulfilled emptiness, a principle of absence or negativity, a radical incompleteness or insatiability, a structural unsatisfactoriness, etc. These belong not in pure life but only in the inexorable march of securitization initiated by the co-upsurge of life and existence as a

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<sup>4</sup> As Agamben says, glossing Kojève, the human 'exists historically only in this tension [between his animality and humanity]; he can be human only to the degree that he transcends and transforms the anthropophorous animal which supports him, and only because, through the action of negation, he is capable of mastering and, eventually, destroying his own animality.' See Agamben, *op. cit.*, 12.

unified field of manifestation.

### III. Pure World

Today we stand at the beginning of the actualization of the potentially pure world, at the threshold of the permanent disintegration and dispossession of being-in-the-earth and hence of the earth itself.<sup>5</sup> Technological accumulation has culminated in the near-absolute conveniencization of all life, the creation of a vast, inexhaustible convenience store where pursuit and provocation are not only thwarted and derailed, but indeed virtually impossible thanks to a perpetual hypersatiety. The convenience drive is by no means exclusive to or a mere function of capitalism; to the contrary, capitalism is – ontologically rather than socio-economically considered – only the highest expression and indeed the completion of the inner tendency of technology qua enframing, and in a twofold sense: on the side of capital itself, insofar as

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<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that this is intended phenomenologically and not in any way biologically, ecologically or whatever else. It has nothing to do with emancipation from physiological processes or basic ‘vital’ states and activities. Even less does it imply that we are on the verge of immortality. Whether any of this can be demonstrated *metaphysically* is an entirely different matter.

consumption of surplus value is itself a productive act, i.e., geared toward the production of a still-greater surplus, that is to say, insofar as the essence and *raison d'être* of capital is the creation of 'general, self-reproducing wealth', i.e., money as 'the lord and god of the world of commodities', the 'omnipresent commodity' which 'satisfies every need, in so far as it can be exchanged for the desired object of every need' and which thus exerts 'a general power over society, over the whole world of gratifications'<sup>6</sup>; and on the side of labour, insofar as convenience is precisely the organizing logic or inner principle of capital's frenetic and incessant fabrication of new needs whose constant gratification is what guarantees the realization of capital itself, i.e., insofar as use-value as such is now defined entirely in terms of convenience, as placing something out of reach 'at one's fingertips', etc. (a thing is useful just to the extent that it makes something easier).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Marx, op. cit. (1973), 224, 221, 231, 218, 222.

<sup>7</sup> Hence Miguel de Beistegui's apposite substitution of 'techno-capitalism' for Heidegger's technology: are we not now living in the epoch of 'the absolute hermetization of the world in techno-capitalism? Has earth itself, Hestia, not withdrawn altogether? In the strife between world and earth, between Hermes and Hestia, it would seem that world has overshadowed earth. The "self-disclosing openness of the broad paths" of world have eclipsed earth as what is "continually self-seclu-

Again it must be stressed that this has nothing to do with any sort of loss of 'nature'. Technology is not the cause of our estrangement from 'nature' but rather the corollary of our originary estrangement from ourselves; technology is nothing more or less than the way in which we have the earth as an earth on the basis of our own self-estrangement. In fact, it is precisely technology itself that *blurs* this primordial estrangement by obliterating and concealing the earth and putting 'nature' in its place. Today we are closer to 'nature' than ever before, for nature, too, has been put at our convenience. We lament our detachment from and violent despoiling of nature and look forward to the day when we will have a saner, healthier relationship to nature; we rejoice in the protection and conservation of nature and delight in 'getting back to nature'. But what we are really dealing with in all of these cases is the *planet*, the environment, 'nature' as a thoroughly intraworldly entity, something that is itself already subjected to the law of accumulation by dispossession. It is not only possible but indeed almost inevitable that

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ding and to that extent sheltering and concealing"...Techno-capitalism is essentially worldly, and in the strife opposing it to earth...world has surmounted earth, thus severing itself from its other, allowing it to slip back into unconcealment, into oblivion.' See de Beistegui, op. cit., 163. Cf. GA 65, 277f./195: 'Why does the earth keep silent in this destruction? Because earth is not allowed the strife with a world...'

we will save nature, the environment; to ensure both the uninhibited flow of capital accumulation and the integrity of the stockpile demands the creation of a kind of techno-utopia of planetary 'sustainability', the transformation of nature into a spotless and hyper-efficient machine that faithfully reproduces itself in the very act of its own pillaging. The limits of nature are transformed into mere barriers surmounted through the logic of cyclicity; the inventory is tended not through ever more hoarding (quantitatively) but rather through the *re-cycling* of waste. Such a perfectly sanitary, sustainable and recyclable planetary machine is the very demise of the earth, for it entails the final taming of both the original violence of the earth's provocations and the concomitant violence of our own free counter-provocations, i.e., the strife in which the earth is first freed as an earth and we ourselves along with it as earth-dwelling beings. The idea of 'harmony with nature' is only another name for the final eradication of the earth in the quest for the total liberation of accumulation.

This explains the curious double infatuation with both work *and* leisure characteristic of contemporary existence, for these are but the two faces of the Janus-head of productive expenditure; they are the ontic, psycho-physical correlates of the ontological movement of the *it strives* qua being-toward-the-pure-world. On the absolute value placed on leisure and relaxation today, Henri Lefebvre has this to say in his *Critique of Everyday Life*:

There is [today] an increasing emphasis on leisure characterized as distraction: rather than bringing any new worries, obligations, or necessities, leisure should offer *liberation from worry and necessity*. Liberation and pleasure – such are the essential characteristics of leisure, according to the parties concerned...The first obvious thing that the so-called ‘modern’ man around us expects of leisure is that it should stop him from being tired and tense, from being anxious, worried and preoccupied. To use a term which is now very widely used by the public at large, he craves *relaxation*.<sup>8</sup>

Dwelling in a vast leisure-convenience complex, the human no longer recalls the earth against which this complex was originally erected. Indeed absolute and uninterrupted leisure – in the sense not of the absence of work but rather of the neutralization of the need to survive (‘liberation from necessity’) – has become normalized to such a degree that rejuvenating diversions from leisure itself are essential. Thus it happens that, in what is perhaps the greatest irony of ‘modern life’, *being-in-the-earth itself* is stockpiled, pre-packaged, marketed and sold as instant, ready-to-hand adventure; being-in-the-earth is mobilized to provide a necessary, and necessarily temporary, *escape* from the

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<sup>8</sup> Henri Lefebvre, John Moore (tr.), *Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. 1: Introduction* (London: Verso, 2008), 33f. (some emphasis added).



smothering boredom of the leisure complex and the din of its incessant distractions via safe, calculated thrills effected through a meticulously orchestrated self-imposed deprivation, a kind of make-believe survival (hunting, trekking, wilderness tours, etc.). Need itself is reduced to just one amongst innumerable other distractions, just another form of entertainment; pretending to have to overcome some life-threatening privation or to struggle against some earthly provocation – whether directly or vicariously, glued to the TV screen – has become a fashionable bourgeois hobby, one that takes place entirely *within* the leisure complex itself.

This raises the question of the status of the completely ‘leisurized’ body, i.e., the completely prosthetized body. Such a body is no longer a *living* body in anything but the most formal sense; it is only an existential body, a body that knows left from right and how to orient itself in contexts of significance but not much else besides. Such a leisurized/prosthetized body is really a second body, a technological or virtual body, a body that has been won and secured by labour and has thereby neutralized the need for labour itself. As Lyotard says, all research today appears ‘to converge on the same aim, that of making the body adaptable to non-terrestrial conditions of life, or of substituting another “body” for it’.<sup>9</sup> The closer we approach to this

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, Geoffrey Bennington (tr.), Rachel Bowlby (tr.),

virtual, non-terrestrial body, the purer and more absolute its realization, the more do we scrub the body clean of every visible earthly inscription and hence the more absurd and insulting do the phenomena of aging and death seem to us. The body from which all traces of earthly strife have been erased comes to stand alone as an independent thing, decontextualized, radically divorced from the earth. If it is nonetheless acknowledged to be 'alive' in some incomprehensible sense, this 'life' is one that is grasped only in terms of certain biochemical processes and functions. The idea that this process-thing should wear out and wear down, suffer inscriptions and eventually succumb to these inscriptions – this is for us the most difficult and maddening thing of all. Today we are obsessed with the perfection of the body, with sculpting the body into a glabrous egg. It is no coincidence that Baudrillard finds this obsession everywhere in the United States, where leisure-by-accumulation reaches its *ne plus ultra* and where the conveniencized body is most conspicuously on display:

The omnipresent cult of the body is extraordinary. It is the only object on which everyone is made to concentrate, not as a source of pleasure, but as an object of frantic concern, in the obsessive fear of failure or substandard performance, a sign and an anticipation of

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*The Inhuman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 62.

death, that death to which no one can any longer give a meaning, but which everyone knows has at all times to be prevented...The care taken of the body while it is alive prefigures the way it will be made up in the funeral home, where it will be given a smile that is really 'into' death.<sup>10</sup>

Everywhere there is bafflement about 'the mysterious process of aging'. New 'diseases' are 'discovered' almost every day – in the form of their treatments. Disease itself is no longer defined according to a logic of normality but rather to one of *ideality*: 'disease' is anything that hinders the exercise of total leisure and prevents the body from becoming a perfectly smooth, glassy exterior.

The techno-leisure-convenience complex does indeed constitute a kind of eschaton in the Judeo-Christian sense, for here life is interpreted precisely as a being on the earth as, specifically, the hardship of a divine punishment that spans between two paradises both of which are utterly devoid of need. 'Life' is a temporary sojourn through a hostile, foreign wilderness, the sentence for Adam's disobedience. When God and humanity are reconciled at the end of history, the world will be restored to its initial edenic state. However, in Eden just as in the purified world, there is neither pursuit nor provocation to any degree whatsoever.

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Baudrillard, Chris Turner (tr.), *America* (London: Verso, 2000), 35.

Certainly Adam eats, but never does he truly hunger, and precisely because the heavenly fruit is dangling everywhere around him, practically lowering itself into his hands, which have only to reach out ever so slightly at the faintest stirring of the gastric juices in order to find instant and constant satisfaction. Eden is a realm of pure, transcendent convenience; it achieves through divine intervention what Paradise accomplishes through accumulation, enframing.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. Freedom

Let us return briefly to a former distinction, viz., that between durability and a certain vulnerability. Again we may cite Arendt: 'The ideals of *homo faber*, the fabricator of the world, which are permanence, stability, and durability, have been sacrificed to abundance, the ideal of the *animal laborans*', i.e., the human insofar as it is concerned only with

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<sup>11</sup> See Agamben, op. cit., 19: 'The resurrection, [Aquinas] teaches, is directed not to the perfection of man's natural life, but only to that final perfection which is contemplative life...The same author who had shortly before affirmed that man's sin had in no way changed the nature and condition of animals, now proclaims unreservedly that animal life is excluded from Paradise, that blessed life is in no case an animal life.'

survival, procuring the necessities of life.<sup>12</sup> Because Arendt sees the essence of life as mere survival, she naturally discovers the modern age to be defined by the rise of 'society' as a sphere of activity delivered over wholly to consumption and thus characterized by an endemic transience, a lack of stability and durability. But the human is never, except under extreme duress, a being that *merely* survives; rather the human is the being that preserves its self through the progressive disqualification of survival by means of techno-accumulation, which is always and necessarily an inexorable process of making-present and making-permanent. Reliability, in Heidegger's sense, *Verlässlichkeit*, characterizes *not* the permanently present but precisely the transient, that which exposes itself to the incursions of the earth. When the reliable thing breaks, it is still a travesty; it is mourned and finding a replacement is difficult. The unreliable, by contrast, the disposable and discardable, just *is* its own replacement, a single link in an infinite chain of replacements, which eliminates vulnerability as such.<sup>13</sup> What Arendt refers to as 'abundance' as the infinitely consumable is really the most

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<sup>12</sup> Arendt, op. cit., 126.

<sup>13</sup> We may note here a formal resemblance to deconstruction, which, by absolutizing the signifier, has the rather ironic effect of creating a regime of the most suffocating presence within which only one permissible activity remains.

durable of all; it is the inexhaustible inventory, *Bestand*. Human consumption is always consumption with and of the durable itself; it is consumption not of survival but of the maintenance of the nullity of survival.

The pure world, Arendt's 'society', is the sphere of the most absolute and homogenizing presence, the realm of the everything-always-ready-to-hand.<sup>14</sup> The ceaseless flow and constant production of novelty that techno-capitalism touts is an elaborate ruse; in reality there is only a shuffling around of the same, of the sundry items of the same inventory. At the same time, it is easy to see that the pure world does not succeed in neutralizing the need to need once and for all, but only displaces the need from labour onto the inventory itself. In a strange but

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<sup>14</sup> Thus it is no wonder that Heidegger, looking for being, discovers first and foremost the ready-to-hand: 'Is it, after all, a coincidence that Heidegger, in his seemingly neutral analysis of the being of the existent being, focused on the way in which this being is always practically and equipmentally involved with the world? Is such a world, the world of the ready-to-hand, not the historical trait of our time, and a manifestation of a historical process in which the ontological structure laid out in the analysis will have always already begun to explicate itself or unfold, and by this I mean the techno-scientific and late capitalistic era?' (de Beistegui, op. cit., 149)

entirely natural way, the human qua pure existent becomes dependent on the very apparatus of convenience that secures its independence from labour and survival. With the total expungement of being-in-the-earth and the earth itself, pure existence turns around and discovers that it has become a prisoner of its own system. Pure existence is indeed finally and totally free, but only within the leisure-convenience complex itself – the regime of permanence, of absolute durability, that guarantees its freedom.

Is this not the paradox of the modern age – that freedom itself has become dependent on a kind of incarceration, that the space of pure potentiality is in fact a prison of presence, durability, mere use? Is it not we ourselves, and not the animals, who are driven around within a ring of benumbed behaviour, free for nothing but ever more accumulation and securitization? And is this not the very situation that accounts for our longstanding obsession in the West, at least since Nietzsche, with a countervailing vision of freedom as a breaking out of the death spiral of productive expenditure and utility altogether, as the possibility of escaping ourselves and inventing ourselves anew? Western humanity has pushed conceptual thought to its outermost limits in a desperate attempt to liberate itself from itself, to poke a hole in the membrane of subjectivity through which it might make a fast getaway into the night. Stifled by our own freedom, or at least the conditions of this freedom, we seek a radically new and different sort of freedom, a freedom from

freedom itself. The name under which this freedom is known is, most generally, 'Life'. Here 'Life' is not being-in-the-earth but rather a *being-outside-the-world*, a retreat into what both Bataille and Deleuze/Guattari call 'Earth' as the zone of intensity, virtuality, multiplicity, becoming, differentiation..., the all-engulfing swarm out of and into which every determinate configuration and organization, every actuality, emerges and submerges. Freedom is escape into this stormy outside, this 'Earth'; it is releasement into the seething chaos of 'Life'; it is the dream, not simply of becoming some ontically different subject or other, but of breaking out of the cage of subjectivity once and for all. One stands at the brink of schizophrenia, has limit-experiences, is desubjectivized, deterritorialized, disorganized – in this way one becomes *inhuman*. Emancipation is found only here: in the passing interval between stable subjective unities, in the movement that carries one subjective position over into the next. Freedom is freedom of movement: to cease to move, to self-differentiate, even for an instant, is to fall back into unfreedom. Thus it turns out that the escape from the pseudo-freedom of the pure world, the freedom of the eternal return of the same, is accomplished only through an empty, formal inverse freedom to be different, which is to say, a *freedom to be free*, to keep on moving, becoming, without rest: the pure existent is only ever truly free, truly liberated from the cage of everyday 'life', insofar as it never stops being the movement of its own freedom.



## V. Strife

This is the either/or of freedom today: to be eternally the same or eternally different, self-differentiating, to be a hypersatiated corpse or to disintegrate into the inhumanity of fiery chaos. For Heidegger it will always have been a matter of something else entirely: viz., of simply learning and remembering to be 'the free' that we ourselves are in our very essence. For Heidegger this freedom denotes our being the site appropriated for the revealing-concealing of Being. We have suggested here that the human be thought differently: as the unity of being-in-the-world and being-in-the-earth. The question, then, is whether we can learn to see the freedom intrinsic to living existence itself as the primordial *it strives* as the event in and through which world, earth and the human itself all co-arise into their essences. Put differently, can we learn to embrace the earth and life as being-in-the-earth, to submit willingly to the game of pursuit and provocation and to discover a new and viable kind of freedom there? Are we capable of seeing life as something other than merely the unmasterable, the necessary, as need, hardship and privation?

In closing, let me put forward the following elementary suggestion: that what is most urgent today is to find our way – *forward*, not back – to a mode of dwelling, of being-in..., in which we commit ourselves to establishing a certain measure in our essential and ineluctable

struggling and striving with the earth, that we resolve to relinquish our crushing vice-grip on the earth and in that way begin – and for the first time – truly to *expose* ourselves to the earth, and in such exposure to discern, not any kind of dolorous slavery or submission, but rather and precisely an original, creative self-realization. Put differently, what I am suggesting is that we might find a certain amelioration in a limited self-extrication from the world and a withdrawal into the more ancient and untamed realm of the world-earth, in a calculated decision to disburden ourselves of calculation and calculative thinking, to cease to posit certainty and security as the ultimate meaning of human existence and to restore to the earth a degree of its stolen power.

At the most superficial level this means learning to make room for what we cannot help but perceive as need, hardship and the like. One resolves to de-conveniencize one's life in the most practical sense, to get by with a certain quantitative reduction of instantaneity and immediate gratification. Here it is a question of *resilience* – that is, of how much inconvenience a thoroughly conveniencized being can tolerate (and indeed, ought to tolerate).

At a second, higher level, it means learning to see labour itself, striving and struggling with the earth via technology, as something positive, as an originary and elemental form of human creativity and flourishing. This is to come to terms with, indeed even to discover a certain 'joy' and 'exuberance' in, the necessity of necessity itself, to

recognize the positivity of necessity as the occasion and the blueprint of freedom, i.e., of free creation. In this way labour is contained; it is prescribed a particular place, duration and intensity within the sphere of active life as a whole. This, I believe, is one of the main virtues of Arendt's philosophy. Arendt writes in *The Human Condition*:

The 'blessing or the joy' of labour is the human way to experience the sheer bliss of being alive which we share with all living creatures, and it is even the only way men, too, can remain and swing contentedly in nature's prescribed cycle, toiling and resisting, labouring and consuming, with the same happy and purposeless regularity with which day and night and life and death follow each other.

Or again:

On its most elementary level the 'toil and trouble' of obtaining and the pleasures of 'incorporating' the necessities of life are so closely bound together in the biological life cycle, whose recurrent rhythm conditions human life in its unique and unilinear movement, that the perfect elimination of the pain and effort of labour would not only rob biological life of its most natural pleasures but deprive the specifically human life of its very liveliness and vitality. The human condition is such that pain and effort are not just symptoms which

can be removed without changing life itself; they are rather the modes in which life itself, together with the necessity to which it is bound, makes life itself felt. For mortals, the 'easy life of the gods' would be a lifeless life.<sup>15</sup>

Put simply, the earth – and this is a point that, if heard lazily, is subject to the most dangerous misinterpretation – is the ground, object or 'material' of the human's free creative activity *as techno-accumulation*, as labour; freedom is exercised concretely in the war for survival, in the assembling and mobilizing of an historical world in the earth. This production of world as a fortification, as shelter (in the broadest sense), is precisely where human potentiality finds a foothold for its free exercise and self-actualization: 'Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity, because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Arendt, *op. cit.*, 106, 120.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 121. Corollary to this is the realization that the struggle for survival is the very force of cohesion that holds society together and checks the rise of solipsism, the reduction of 'with-being' to a being-with-other-monads-of-accumulation-and-consumption. Thus Lefebvre writes: 'No matter how alienated need, natural necessity and man's essential properties may become, they still form a link between the

But there is also, I think, a still higher level yet – in a way, a synthesis of the previous two – one that involves and is grounded in a realization of our essence as the *it strives* itself and a learning to be what we are from out of this essential self-knowledge. To see ourselves as the *it strives* is to see that the creativity of labour is not simply something that follows from need taken as a *factum brutum* but rather is the self-expression of the *it strives* itself in its originary self-alienation. In this case it is first and foremost a matter of asking: how do we *become* the striving of the *it strives* given that the *it strives* is always already a movement away from itself and toward the cancellation of the strife? How do we create when every creation is at once a realization *and* a partial neutralization of the ground of this creativity itself, the *it strives*? For every creation embodies this dual aspect: on the one hand, that

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members of this society. Thus these needs in everyday life are a cohesive force for social life even in bourgeois society, and they, *not political life*, are the real bond' (Lefebvre, op. cit., 91). The freedom of the pure world is not only the pseudo-freedom of identity but also an isolating and socially alienating freedom. Everyone is free to do as he pleases, but always and only by himself. (Lefebvre thus disagrees with Arendt on the question of the role of political action for social unity. For the latter, although labour is essential, it is never the 'real bond' of social life.)

which emerges from out of the inner alienation of the *it strives*, out of the natural tension of living existence; on the other, that which, through accumulation, *dis*-alienates living existence by pushing it ever further in the direction of pure existence. How do we learn to dwell *within* and *as* an alienation that is always already geared toward its own self-overcoming? Movement cannot cease without destroying living existence as such, whether this cessation occurs through a retrogression to bare survival or a progression to a state of absolute non-survival. How do we stay in a motion that tends to contract into the fixity of non-motion? For not to accumulate – that is, to renounce technology once and for all and to abscond from the zone of convenience – is not an option; technology is not the sort of thing concerning which we can be ‘for’ or ‘against’, and precisely because we ourselves *are* technology, i.e., are born in techno-accumulation. The question is only whether and how we can learn to strive the strife, to accumulate and conveniencize in the most authentic sense, yet in such a way as to leave the earth a measure of its own capacity for violence, its own power to assail and provoke – whether we can, somewhat paradoxically, *maintain* the power differential between world and earth *as a differential* (i.e., the ‘prevailing’ of being-in-the-world). Only in this way, I think, does it make any sense to talk about something like ‘letting the earth be’, which always means, letting it be a competitor, letting it partake of the strife.

To learn to perceive and to relate to ourselves as the primal *it strives*

is something different than to come back to ourselves as the clearing of Being. But is it possible that these two, the return to the *it strives* and the remembrance of Being, are in fact bound up with each other in the most intimate way? In his *Parmenides* lectures of 1942-3 Heidegger writes:

[A] moment of history is approaching whose uniqueness is by no means determined simply, or at all, on the basis of the current situation of the world and of our own history in it. What is at stake is not simply the being and non-being of our historical people, nor the being and not-being of a 'European culture', for in these instances what is at stake is only beings. In advance of all that, a primordial decision must be made concerning Being and not-being themselves, Being and not-being in their essence, in the truth of their essence. How are beings supposed to be saved and secured in the free of their essence, if the essence of Being is undecided, unquestioned, and even forgotten?<sup>17</sup>

Now it is true that a primordial decision must indeed be made, but perhaps this decision has less to do with the remembering of Being as such and more to do with the remembering and recovering of our own lived life. Perhaps, in other words, the real decision is one that is

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<sup>17</sup> GA 54, 241/162.

substantially less dramatic and mysterious than the decision concerning Being as such, one that pertains to our being-in-the-earth and the earth itself. Moreover, perhaps it is just such a recovery and rehabilitation of earthly life that is the *precondition* of anything like a remembrance of 'Being'. For if beings as a whole manifest themselves to us as mere inventory, this is only because we ourselves have constructed this inventory as a buffer against life. Accordingly, is it not the continual presence of life within the totality of our own being that keeps being itself tethered to the earth and to things? Is it not only and precisely in the strife that we discover the real meaning of tools and equipment, dwelling places and furniture, bread and water, plant and animal, field and forest, mountain and pasture, lake and stream? To say that these things offer themselves to us as what they really and truly *are* is simply to say that they are kept grounded in our own self-grounding-in-self-separation, that is, in our own being the self-alienated median, portal, joint, hyphen – that with and through them we are kept firmly within the bounds of our nature.

This decision would thus be a true decision, one that does not decide in favour of any waiting or preparing, any soterio-eschatology – certainly the most bizarre and problematic aspect of Heidegger's philosophy – but rather one that we should have to take upon ourselves as our own special project, a decision for which we alone could be held responsible. If we are indeed the 'shepherds of Being', then is it not we



ourselves who have so thoughtlessly allowed Being to wander off and go astray? *Bad shepherding!* And if this is so, then is it not also we ourselves who must resolve to set out and find it?

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