

ONE

The Phenomenon of Life

*Human, Animal, and World in Heidegger's 1929–30
Freiburg Lectures*

[I]n what way, and whether, the Being of animals, for example, is constituted by a “time” at all, remains a problem in its own right.

—Heidegger, *Being and Time*

Do animals have Angst?

—Heidegger, *The Fundamental
Concepts of Metaphysics*

Throughout his Marburg and Freiburg lecture courses of the 1920s, as in his magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger never ceased to emphasize the central importance of the phenomenon of world—a phenomenon that, he claimed, had never been adequately appreciated or understood in the history of philosophy, if indeed it had been seen at all.¹ As Hannah Arendt astutely noted, Heidegger’s concept of world “in many respects stands at the center of his philosophy.”² While *Being and Time* emphasized world as a referential totality of signification, enabling the disclosure of meanings that first “found the possible Being of word and language” (SZ, 87), and as a phenomenon to which Dasein was always already exposed in advance, that to which Dasein could only inevitably return in whatever degree of explicitness (76), it also highlighted the fundamental attunement of *Angst* as that which “first discloses world as world” (187). The “peculiar temporality” of *Angst* “holds” Dasein in the presence of its ownmost thrownness, yet in such a way as to hold the moment or *Augenblick* of possible decision “at the ready” (344). Such being held, the present study will argue, enables the distinctive phenomenon of human *ēthos*. For in disclosing Dasein in its “being toward” its ownmost possibility for Being, the temporality of *Angst* thereby first opens Dasein to the possibility of coming toward itself within and from out of its

thrownness, a “coming toward itself” that Heidegger elucidates as the originary phenomenon of the future (325), of Dasein’s freedom, understood as a coming to be free for its ownmost potentiality for Being. We should note from the outset that, by contrast with Greek ontology, for which the world is disclosed by the *theōria* of philosophy and science, the primary disclosure of the presencing of a world is, on Heidegger’s account, accomplished not by contemplative or philosophical knowledge, but by a fundamental *pathos* or attunement (*Befindlichkeit*); and such *pathos* is fundamental in attuning, in advance of any explicit deliberation or discursive understanding, the way in which we are held in the presencing of the moment—in short, in attuning our entire *ēthos*.

In this first chapter, concerned with the phenomenon of life and with the time of life, we seek to approach what is distinctive and unique about the temporality of human life—or in Heidegger’s terms, about the relation between the finite Being (*Dasein*) of human life and the happening of a world—by accompanying Heidegger’s phenomenological analyses of animal life as presented in his 1929–30 Freiburg lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. What emerges from these analyses is, we shall argue, that the very *sense* of life—the sense of presence and of the time of life—is quite different in the case of human being and animal respectively. In and of itself, of course, the claim that there is a decisive distinction between the Being of the human and that of other living beings is quite traditional and, where it issues in humanist or theological claims as to the superiority of the human species, not unproblematic, to say the least. Yet what is radical about Heidegger’s phenomenological analyses here, we try to show, is that this distinction is never entirely reducible to an existing difference between different species of living being (and in this sense is not of the order of presence), but is itself temporalized in the “ekstatic” temporality of the world into which human Dasein is thrown. The happening of this temporal distinction not only enables the Being and worldly dwelling of human beings as intrinsically “protoethical,” that is, as ethical in the originary sense of the word *ēthos*; it also implicates such dwelling in what Heidegger calls an event of world-formation (*Weltbildung*). With regard to human *ēthos*, the time of human life becomes visible as held in the tension between the presence of the moment and the poietic happening of a greater whole.³

THE SOUL, UNITY OF THE BODY

A living being is generally understood as an organism that has various organs. Yet what exactly is an "organism"? What is the relation between the unity of the organism, classically defined as the "soul," and the individual sense organs: eyes, ears, etc.?

The question of the relation between the unity of a living being and its various sense organs was raised in a decisive form by Socrates in Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, not with respect to living beings in general, but specifically with respect to the human being. The issue arises in the context of a dialogue concerning the essence of human knowledge. The initial answer proposed is that knowing is *aisthēsis*, sense perception, an apprehending via the senses. Yet what is it that does the perceiving in sense perception? Do we, Socrates asks, see with our eyes and hear with our ears? Or does the perception or apprehending of something necessarily involve something more than our specific sense organs? What does it mean to say that we see "with" our eyes? Is it the eyes as sense organs that do the seeing? Who or what is it that is seeing? Who or what is the "we" who see? Certainly, our specific sense organs are necessarily involved in all sense perception: we cannot see a sensible object without our eyes. Yet does this mean that it is the eyes as sense organs that actually do the seeing? Suppose that this were the case, says Socrates. Suppose that our eyes were what actually do the seeing, that it is our ear that hears sounds, our nose that does the smelling, our tongue that tastes. This state of affairs, as Socrates puts it, would be uncanny. For each particular sense organ perceives its own particular sense object: the ear hears sounds, the eye sees color; and even our sense of touch is different at different points of the body. The various capacities for sense perception are dispersed throughout different locations on the body. There would thus be vision at one point of the body, hearing at another, and so on. Such a state of affairs would be truly uncanny, since there would be no one there who could both see *and* hear *and* smell simultaneously. There would be no *one* there, no unity or unifying activity in which the various senses could belong together and be at one and the same time. Thus, Socrates argues, in order for there to be *someone* who sees, hears, smells, and so on, these senses must "reach toward something like one idea [*eis mian tina idean*], whether we call it soul [*psuchē*] or something else" (184 d).

Socrates' argument makes it clear that, in human apprehending at least, the sense organs (in Greek, *organon*) per se are not that which actively do the perceiving; rather, they are only that *through which* perception occurs. The sense organs are merely channels or "instruments" of perception, as the Greek *organon* (tool, implement) implies. The activity of perceiving as such is accomplished by the soul, by the apprehending or "seeing" (*noein*) of something more than the particulars disclosed by the various senses, namely, the unity of their belonging together in one *idea*, in one "vision." We cannot here examine the astonishing detail with which Heidegger in his 1931–32 course on Plato's *Republic* and *Theaetetus* (GA 34) analyzes the Socratic argument, but it is worth noting his emphasis that the Greek *idea* here (and the *noein* and *dianoein* it implies) does not yet refer to a nonsensible form opposed to the realm of *aisthēsis*. *Idea* means, rather, Heidegger argues, "something seen in its being seen" (*das Gesichtete in seinem Gesichtetsein*), the *being seen* of a unity that has been sighted (GA 34, 173). The apprehending (*noein*) of this unity throughout (*dia*) all differentiation of the senses and their objects is not simply an apprehending that occurs *by way of* the sense organs conceived as "instruments," but an apprehending that *stretches throughout* the various channels of sense perception, relates them to one another and holds them together in their unity. It is on the basis of such a unity that any dispersion of sense perception is possible, a perceiving of "this *and not* that." Our sensuous, bodily dispersion is a dispersion *in* gathering and a gathering or unifying *in* dispersion. As gathering and unifying in advance of any sensory apprehending of particulars, the soul (which is here not yet isolated as an entity, but conceived and seen as an "activity," a being-seen) is, as Heidegger puts it, nothing other than that stretching (*Erstreckung*) that stretches throughout the various sense organs, enabling a gathered relating to sense-objects. It is the presence of soul as this relational stretching (the striving of Plato's *erōs*) that first enables something corporeal to become organ-like, to be a body. "Only thus can something corporeal [*ein Körper*] become a body [*Leib*]," remarks Heidegger (GA 34, 177).

This Platonic view of the unitary Being of a living body in relation to its sense organs carries a certain truth and persuasiveness with respect to the human body and its manner of existing. But does it also have certain limitations? Furthermore, can this view legitimately be extended to apply to all living beings, human

and nonhuman? May plants and animals also be said to “have” a soul in this manner? We know that Aristotle, in his *De Anima*, will subsequently understand the soul as the form (*eidos*) of a natural body that is able to live; as such, the soul is said to be the primary actuality or “entelechy” (*entelecheia*) of any body that has organs, whether plant, animal, or human (412 a20ff.). Although Aristotle provides an extremely careful phenomenological analysis of the differences between various genera and species of living being, and although he denies that animals or plants in general have *nous* (the capacity of *noein*), his analyses nevertheless open the way for understanding each and every living being as a kind of “organism.”

THE ORGANISM AND ITS ORGANS

In his Freiburg lecture course from winter semester 1929–30, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Heidegger attempts to indicate what is problematic about the Platonic-Aristotelian approach to understanding living beings, and especially animals, in terms of a fundamental form and principle called the soul. More precisely, he problematizes not so much the Platonic or Aristotelian conceptions per se, but their modern interpretation that makes itself known in contemporary scientific and technical conceptions of living beings as “organisms.” According to such conceptions, an animal is basically an organism that has various organs. Each of the organs perform various functions that serve the underlying end of maintaining the organism itself as a whole. What the organism itself is and is capable of appears to be determined by the organs that it has. For example, it is evident that only those living organisms that have eyes can see. Having eyes is clearly a precondition of seeing, it makes vision possible.

But what does it mean to “have” eyes? And is seeing simply a result of having eyes? In the 1929–30 course, Heidegger begins his elucidation of the essence of the organism by trying to extricate our understanding of the organism and its organs from any instrumental conception. Yet the very word *organ*, stemming from the Greek *organon* (“working instrument,” or *Werkzeug*, as Heidegger translates it), and related to *ergon* (“work,” in German: *Werk*), itself suggests that an instrumental conception of living beings has been in play since the Greeks (GA 29/30, 312). An “instrumental”

interpretation may be defined as one that views the function of the organs in terms of an extrinsic end, purpose, or *telos*, and by extension regards the relation between the accomplishments of the organism (for example, seeing) and its organs (having eyes) as being "organized" in terms of cause and effect or means–end relations (we see because we have eyes; the eyes are a means to seeing).

Yet to what extent is an organ not an instrument? Both the organ and the instrument accomplish something; both are characterized by an end or purpose, by being "for something" or "in order to do something." A pen is for writing; the eye is for seeing. Yet may we conclude from this that both are pieces of equipment or instruments? *Is seeing produced by the eye?*, Heidegger asks. Does the eye have a *telos*, an end or purpose, *in the same way* that an implement does? Not at all. Seeing is not produced by the eye as the end of the activity of seeing in the manner that the use of a pen produces a piece of writing. For in the case of writing, the use of an instrument produces an end product that is other than the productive activity itself. The terms of Heidegger's analysis here are clearly Aristotelian, appealing to Aristotle's distinction between *praxis* and *poiēsis*. Writing is a form of *poiēsis*, a *technē* where the end product lies beyond (*para*) the activity of producing. In seeing, by contrast, there is, according to Aristotle, no remainder outside of or beyond the activity itself at the moment it is accomplished. Thus, vision, both perceptual and speculative (*horasis*, *theōria*), is a paradigm for *praxis* in the highest, ontological sense. For here the end or *telos* of the process is included in the activity itself: at the same time we both see and have seen. And life (*zēn*), the living of living beings, is also a *praxis* in precisely this sense of being an end in itself: at the same time (in the same moment), notes Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, we are at once living and have lived (1048 b18ff.).⁴

This distinction between the organ and the instrument in terms of the ontological status of their activity in each case is therefore indicative of a fundamental distinction that must be made with regard to the manner of Being belonging to these beings themselves. For whereas an instrument or piece of equipment is an independent entity, something independently present at hand or ready to hand and available for different people to use, the organ such as the eye is in each case incorporated into a unique and singular living being. As Heidegger elucidates:

The pen is an *independent* entity, something ready to hand for *several different* people. By contrast, the eye, the organ, is, for those who need and use it, *never* present in *this* way. Rather every living being can in each case see only with *its* eyes. These eyes, and all the organs, are not independently present at hand like an item of use, a piece of equipment, but are incorporated into that entity which makes use of them. (320–21)

Thus, Heidegger proceeds to distinguish the organ, as having a capacity (*Fähigkeit*) for something, from the instrument or piece of equipment as having a readiness (*Fertigkeit*) for something. Readiness, he emphasizes, is here meant in a double sense: The piece of equipment is ready both as completed or finished, and in the sense of being ready or usable *for* something. Heidegger is here pointing to an ambiguity in the meaning of “end.” For “end” can mean either completion or purpose. (This corresponds to the ambiguity of the Greek meaning of *telos*.) Both the organ and the piece of equipment can serve some further end, and their essence is determined by this end in each instance. As we have just indicated, the nature of the end or “purpose” is fundamentally different in each case. Nonetheless, both the organ and the instrument might be said to serve some end, to be “ready for” something in the most general sense. But the instrument lies ready for doing something in lying independently before us; moreover, it is itself, qua instrument, a *product* of a prior *technē*, whereas the living organ of the body is neither a product of human *technē*, nor is it an independent, self-subsistent thing.⁵ It is therefore highly questionable whether we may consider the organ as something independent, since the eye taken by itself does not have the capacity to see, just as a piece of equipment taken by itself is not capable of anything at all, but requires the human hand to actualize its potentiality. The question to be raised is:

Can the animal see because it has eyes, or does it have eyes because it can see? Why does the animal have eyes? Why can it have such things? Only because it can see. Possessing eyes and being able to see are not the same thing. (319)

It is *being able to see*, the potentiality for seeing, Heidegger points out, that first makes the possession of eyes possible and necessary. “An eye taken by itself is no eye at all” (323). The eye is not an

instrument that exists on its own, only to be subsequently incorporated into an organism. Rather, organs, and their essence as organs, that is, as having capacities, always belong to the organism and develop out of the organism. We must therefore say, not that organs have capacities, but that capacity belongs to and proceeds from the respective organism as a whole. The presence of a particular capacity as such thus precedes the organ corresponding to it: the organ develops out of the capacity. Heidegger illustrates this by reference to protoplasmic amobae and infusoria, whose organs continually form themselves as and when required, and then disappear. Yet may one not conclude, from the fact that specific organs develop out of the organism, that the organism itself *produces* its own organs, indeed produces, reproduces, and renews itself within certain limits? Such a conclusion seems difficult to deny; moreover, it allows us to perceive a major difference between an organism and a machine. A machine has to be constructed by human beings, and also regulated by them, whereas an organism is able to regulate itself.

Nevertheless, there is something about this conclusion that Heidegger wishes to resist. His resistance concerns the further conclusion that is normally drawn from these observations, namely the conclusion that, on account of its capacity for self-production, self-renewal, and self-regulation, the organism must have within it a specific active force or vital agent, an "entelechy." This conclusion, Heidegger insists, closes off the problem of the essence of life. For it implies some kind of efficient cause that originates and controls the movement and development of the organism, producing its organs (Heidegger speaks of an "effective agency" or "causal factor," a *Wirken* or *Wirkungsmoment* [325–26]). It is questionable, indeed, whether we may speak of a *producing* of organs on the part of the organism at all. For the organs are not produced in the way that an item of equipment is made ready. Heidegger underlines the independent character of the produced thing as opposed to a living, emergent, or disappearing organ by pointing out their different relatedness to *time*. In the case of, say, a hammer, it is in a certain way a matter of indifference how long the hammer is actually present or whenever it is destroyed. In the case of an organism such as a protoplasmic organism, the time at which the organs appear is, by contrast, critical. In the protoplasmic creature, each organ appears as and when it is needed. The organs are bound to

the *duration and time of life*, the time of the living organism itself, and not in the first instance to an objectively ascertainable time (the time of something present at hand). The organs are bound to the lifetime and life process of the organism, to its capacity for living.

Heidegger examines various cases of protoplasmic organisms because they are best suited philosophically to the task of understanding the essence of the organ and its relation to the organism. Such life-forms appear to have no organs, or no enduring organs; at most their organs are "momentary organs." Although Heidegger does not develop the question of the *time* of the living being here, this critical temporal nature of the organs which emerges clearly in the case of protoplasmic cells helps to ward off an illusion that "repeatedly misleads" existing approaches to understanding the essential nature of organs. For in the case of those so-called "higher" animals which have an "enduring animal form," the illusion arises that the organs are something present at hand, something that remains constant, and that can be regarded independently and understood by analogy with instruments. Yet the temporal distinctions that become apparent when considering protoplasmic animals make it evident that the specific manner of Being pertaining to living entities is fundamentally different from the Being of the present at hand or ready to hand piece of equipment. "Organs, even though they appear to endure and to be present at hand, are nevertheless given only in *that manner of Being* which we call *living*" (329).

On the basis of these considerations, Heidegger argues that the "purposive" or teleological character of equipment and organ is fundamentally different in each case. The eye does not serve vision in the way that the pen serves to write. Whereas that which has been made ready serves or is "serviceable" (*dienlich*) for some (extrinsic) end, the organ as capacity must be understood as "subservient" (*diensthaft*) to the *potentiality* of the specific organism to which it is bound.

This distinction between the Being of equipment, or instrumentality, and the Being of the organ now enables Heidegger to characterize more precisely the nature of capacity pertaining to the potentiality of the organ as opposed to the readiness of equipment. To say that something is ready-made (*fertig*) means not only that (1) it is completed; and (2) it is ready to serve for something; but means also (3) that "in its Being it is at an end," it cannot proceed

any further. The piece of equipment *in itself* is unable to do anything; the pen, for example, in itself cannot write, just as the hammer in itself cannot hammer. Writing or hammering require that an additional action be brought to the pen or the hammer from the outside, from beyond them: the possibility of them serving some end must, as Heidegger expresses it, first be "torn from the piece of equipment." In sum, "being a hammer is *not a pushing toward hammering*, the ready-made hammer lies outside a possible hammering" (330–31). This lying outside or beyond is to be contrasted with the way in which an organ such as the eye *belongs to* the capacity to see, because the capacity has the intrinsic character of subservience. Capacity, as Heidegger now formulates it, "*transposes itself into its own wherefore, and does so in advance with respect to itself*" (331). This pushing toward and transposing itself into its own end in advance indeed characterizes what is "properly peculiar" to capacity; the hammer in its Being, by contrast, "knows nothing of the sort."

The self-transpositional character of the capacity of a living organ marks its very Being as living, as a kind of bodying-forth. Whereas using a piece of equipment for a particular end subordinates the equipment to a prescription that has in advance prescribed its possible usage (this being taken from the idea [*idea, eidos*] or "plan" in view of which the equipment was first produced), the living capacity itself requires no such external prescription. It is intrinsically self-regulating, and this self-regulation of its pushing toward its own end or "wherefore" characterizes capacity as *driven*. Capacity accomplishes itself as drive, as a driving itself forward or being driven forward that regulates in advance the possible range of accomplishment of the specific organ. Moreover, in its self-driving or driven character, each capacity traverses a particular dimension: its dynamic occurs as *traversal*. Yet the self-regulating traversal of a dimension is not to be taken in the spatial sense; the drives that are triggered in and as the actualization of various capacities are not merely extrinsic "occasionings" of the spatial movements of the living body. Rather, the dimensionality in question is that traversed by the capacities of the organs as living; the dimensional traversal is the very Being of the living body, the pulse of living tissue. This traversal, as the movement of driven capacities, drives and extends in advance right through the unfolding of a capacity. The movement of living drives, Heidegger

adds, can therefore never be understood along the lines of a mechanical or mathematical model, except by neglecting what is specific to the organs and organism *as living*.

These reflections allow us to address once more the question raised earlier: Can the animal see because it has eyes, or does it have eyes because it can see? What the animal's eye can accomplish in each case, and the structure of the eye as organ, must be understood in terms of the capacity for seeing. The capacity for seeing, on the other hand, cannot adequately be determined in terms of the eye and its anatomical structure. This does not mean, of course, that empirical observation of the organ is irrelevant or could simply be disregarded. The anatomical structure of the bee's eye, for example, can help us to understand how the bee "sees" only if we consider it on the basis of the *specific* manner of Being of the bee and its capacities. Heidegger cites a striking experiment in which the retinal image appearing in the eye of a glow worm was photographed. The photograph allows us to identify relatively clearly various features of a window within the glow worm's field of vision. The insect's eye, Heidegger comments, is capable of forming an image or "view" of the window. But does this tell us what the glow worm *sees*? "Not at all. *From what the organ accomplishes we cannot at all determine the capacity for seeing, nor the way in which whatever is accomplished by the organ is taken into the service of the potentiality for seeing*" (336). Indeed, we cannot even begin to problematize the relationship between this insect's eye as organ and its capacity for seeing until we have considered the glow worm's *environment*, and the way in which the animal in general can have an environment. For the insect's eye is as it were "inserted," as something nonindependent, between its environment and the seeing animal, where "inserted" means existing in the manner of the drive-like traversal pertaining to capacity.

Yet not only the environment must be taken into account, but also the animal or *organism as a whole* that "has" capacities. What constitutes, or what is the essence of, an organism as such? The question of the essence of the organism, which Heidegger approaches most cautiously, may be considered from two perspectives: first, in terms of the nature of capacity; and second, in terms of the relation between organs and the environment. Heidegger does not himself tease out these two threads so cleanly in his

analysis; we do so here in order to show the intrinsic complexity of the analysis and the multiplicity of perspectives in play.

Regarding the first of these threads, the subservience that characterizes the nature of capacity as such has made it clear that each *specific* organ must be understood in terms of the way it is incorporated into and belongs to the specific organism under consideration. In analyzing the nature of an organ, which as it were constitutes the "between" or the "interface" between the organism as a living being and its environment, the analysis has thus had tacit recourse to a certain understanding of what it means to be an organism in general. The analysis of the nature of capacity pointed back to an understanding of the capacity for something in terms of a drive-like traversal in which the capacity transposes itself into its own end or "wherefore," that is, *into its own Being*. For in being actualized, the capacity (for example, the capacity to see) does not lose itself or exhaust itself as capacity, but precisely retains itself as such a capacity, and does so in and throughout its driving traversal (seeing). This self-like character, however, does not belong to the specific organ as such, but to the capacity that the organ itself subserves and into which it is drawn. The specific capacities belong to and are regulated by the organism itself as a whole: it is the organism as a whole that appears to be constituted by this *self-like* nature. The organism is as it were the site or locus of the various capacities which, in turn, unfold from out of and subserve the organism as a whole. We have already encountered this self-like character of the organism, Heidegger reminds us, in noting that what is peculiar to the organism as opposed to a machine is that the organism (within certain limits) is *self-producing*, *self-regulating*, *self-renewing*. It is, as we say, *self-preserving*.

With regard to the second thread, this self-like, self-preserving character of the organism may also be considered in relation to the environment. Earlier, while discussing the features of certain protoplasmic creatures, Heidegger had noted that not only do the "momentary organs" that appear remain bound to the living process of the animal (unlike produced equipment), but that these organs never pass over into another body or substance. In the case of pseudopodia, for example, these protoplasmic creatures produce apparent limbs by which to propel themselves. "Yet when one of these apparent limbs of the animal comes into contact with that of another consisting of the same substance, it never flows

over into the other or combines with the cellular content of the other. This means that *the organ is retained within the capacity of touch and movement and indeed can only be superseded or replaced through this capacity*" (329). The organs of a particular organism, even where they are highly fluid and changing (without the apparent permanence of the human or so-called higher organisms), never pass over into or lose themselves in the substance of another organism. In other words, the organs belong to an organism that, even at the fluid level of a protoplasm, has the character of self-retention and self-differentiation from other substances, including substances that are generically the same.

The question remains of how this self-like character of the organism is to be conceived. For the self-regulating and self-retaining nature of the organism has led, Heidegger argues, to a precipitous explanation of the selfhood of the animal "by way of analogy with our own selves," so that we speak of an animal "soul," a vital force, an entelechy, or even ascribe consciousness to animal life (332). We should not deny a certain self-like character pertaining to the organism, for this lies in the very essence of capacity as such: in its driving traversal, a capacity does not depart from itself, but retains itself in and as the very movement into its wherefore. And yet it does so "*without any so-called self-consciousness or even reflection, without any relating back to itself*" (340). Every living organism exists in the manner of being "proper to itself," of being "properly peculiar" (*sich-zu-eigen, eigentümlich*), in other words, of belonging to itself. Yet not every living being belongs to itself in the manner of a human being or "person," that is, in the manner of *selfhood*. Heidegger thus now proposes to reserve the terms *self* and *selfhood*, taken in the strict sense, to characterize the way in which human beings belong to themselves, in contrast to the "proper Being" (*Eigentum*) peculiar to the animal. With regard to the translation of these difficult terms, it should be noted that *Eigentum* normally means one's "property," what one owns, and *eigentümlich* would ordinarily be rendered as "peculiar." In the present context, both words thus carry the sense of something withheld from others, withdrawn or even refused, even something secretive. As we shall see, a certain refusal will shortly be identified by Heidegger as belonging to the Being of the animal.

The organism as a unity of the living body that is constantly articulating itself into various capacities and yet retaining itself as

a unity amid this multiplication and apparent dispersion of capacities unfolds and sustains its very Being (living) as this unity. An organism does not simply “have” capacities as extrinsic properties, but thrives amid this articulating of itself into capacities. It lives as *capability* and *potentiality*. Its living is the very ability to articulate such potentiality into a self-traversing movement into living capacities, a movement of traversal that is also a self-retention, a being “organized.” Capability characterizes the essence of life. “Only that which is capable and remains capable, lives” (343). An organism, therefore, Heidegger insists, is not to be thought of as a present at hand entity that “has” various properties, capacities, and organs: “The term ‘organism’ is therefore no longer a name for this or that entity at all, but rather designates a *particular and fundamental way of Being*” (342).

Thus far, Heidegger’s analyses have served to put in question the instrumental view of the relation between organs and their activities. By emphasizing the unique way in which the organ is embedded in the living activity of the organism as a whole, Heidegger shows that the relation between an organ and its accomplishment is not an extrinsic means–ends relation, as reductively conceived by mechanistic models of life. The organs are not simply instruments of the living body. Yet although this technical or instrumental teleology of the Being of living organs, as the Being of the organism itself, is readily refuted, there remains the possibility of a teleology of living Being that is not so much technical (modeled around so-called efficient causality) as practical (oriented toward final causality). According to this teleology, the Being of the living entity or organism constitutes an end in itself. The relation between the organism, its organs, and their accomplishment is indeed not one of an *extrinsic* instrumentality conceived along productionist lines, but rather constitutes an *internal* teleology whereby the organs and their activities subserve the higher, organizing end of the Being (living) of the organism itself.⁶ This end is both *origin* and *telos* of every moment of living activity; it is origin and *telos* of itself, of its own Being and subsisting qua living.

This schema of a “practical,” internal teleology is indeed that proposed by Aristotle in his classical treatise on the essence of life, the *De Anima*. Although he initially appeals to “technical” analogies to approach the issue of life, Aristotle is careful to emphasize that these are merely analogies, which are not appropriate to char-

acterizing the nature of the living. It is the concept of *entelecheia*, rather, appropriate to the realm of *praxis*, that Aristotle chooses in order to characterize the living being as an end in itself (the *psuchē*). According to Aristotle, the soul or *psuchē* is the primary entelechy of the living body, and such will be any body that has organs. As having (being) its own end in advance (namely, in advance of any particular moment of actualization), which is the sense of *entelecheia*, the living being is also precisely “in itself” (*en heauto*) *archē* of its own movement and rest (412 b17f.). Thus, Aristotle conceives of life in the most general sense, encompassing both animal and human, as *praxis*, as being an end in itself. For Aristotle, the decisive distinction between animal and human is of course that humans can relate to that being-an-end as such, via *logos*, and thus be ethical and political beings. Yet leaving aside for the moment the question of whether this characterization of *praxis* is appropriate even to understanding the essence of human existence, the first question that needs to be raised in the present context is whether the conception of internal teleology is indeed appropriate or adequate to living beings in general. Or is perhaps something about the otherness of other living beings obscured in adopting a schema (itself highly questionable) from the realm of human affairs in order to characterize all living beings?

In Heidegger’s text, the possibility of this internal teleology has thus far been maintained precisely in the insistence that the organs and their capacities in each case *subserve* the Being of the organism as a whole. But to what extent can an “organism” be characterized as being a self-contained, self-regulating whole? Is an organism origin and end of its own proper Being, of its being gathered into “itself” in such a way as to have and dispose over the possibility of self-movement and rest? The viability and phenomenological appropriateness of this schema depend on the organism “itself” being accessible in its self-like character, or in its own “proper” Being. And if the “organism,” as a *living* being, is not adequately conceivable as something purely “present at hand” (a schema that, Heidegger suggests, is borrowed from the realm of *technē*, equating being complete (being-at-an-end) with the completedness of the produced “work” or product), if its own proper Being is *not fully manifest* as such, how can we gain access to the living of this other being as such? Does the Aristotelian notion of the soul as *eidos* still import a technical or productionist

approach into our understanding of other living beings, an approach that tends to obscure the character of their own proper Being?

THE ANIMAL AS OTHER

In showing the shortcomings of a technical-instrumental interpretation of the organs of an organism, the ontological inappropriacy of this schema came to light fairly readily. It soon became apparent that the application of an instrumental teleology was unsuitable, because it is taken from a realm of beings that are obviously not living (or at least not normally regarded as such). The Being of equipment or tools (presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand) is evidently not the same as the Being of living beings. Of course, the predominance of a productionist-instrumental understanding of Being in Western scientific and philosophical thinking has not prevented this schema from being applied to living beings also. By contrast with this first schema, the second, that of an internal-practical teleology, appears initially much less problematic with regard to its ontological appropriacy. For we recognize immediately that this schema is indeed more properly attuned to understanding the Being of an entity as living. An indication of this is also the fact that, whereas in our initial discussion of the organism and its organs, concerned with refuting equipmental teleology, the interpretations of the organism and its organs could in principle apply to *any* living being, raising the question of the appropriacy of an internal teleology of life immediately involves us in appealing to a possible distinction between *different kinds* of living being. Our concern now is not whether this schema is suitable for characterizing living beings in general, but whether it is phenomenologically and ontologically appropriate to those living beings that we regard as other than human (and, in this context, particularly those that seem most human-like, namely, animals). For we recognize that human existence can to some extent, and within certain limits, anticipate its own Being and thus be an origin and end of its own actions, of itself as *praxis*.

In analyzing the relation between organs, their accomplishment, and the organism, Heidegger did not simply overlook or ignore the possibility and even necessity of distinguishing between the living Being of the human and that of other beings. Rather, this

issue was constantly kept in the background as it were, occasionally surfacing by way of a critical caution or reminder of the preliminary and tentative status of these analyses. As a question, the human/animal distinction thus serves as a critical limit to the preliminary analyses of the organism and its organs. For example, after recounting the glow worm experiment and recalling the need to consider the glow worm's relation to its environment before drawing any conclusions as to what it sees, Heidegger cautions:

The difficulty is not merely that of determining *what* it is that the insect sees, but also that of determining *how* it sees. For we should not compare our own seeing with that of the animal without further ado, since the *seeing and the potentiality to see of the animal* is a *capacity*, whereas *our potentiality to see* ultimately has a *character of possibility quite other* and possesses a *way of Being that is quite other*. (337)

Of course, claiming that our way of Being is "quite other" than that of the animal seems to raise the objection: but how then can we know anything about the Being of the animal, without falling into a naive anthropomorphism? Will not our interpretation of the animal necessarily be anthropocentric? How do we know what it is like to be an animal? If the animal is truly other, will not any attempt on our part to define its Being necessarily reduce and erase its otherness? The question of access to the animal and to living beings that are nonhuman thus proves uncircumventable; moreover, the prospect of our knowing what it is like to be an animal seems doomed from the outset. Yet perhaps such objections, which raise themselves repeatedly in contemporary debate, are themselves historically conditioned by the epoch of subjectivity. What is striking about such objections is that they presuppose that our perspective is at once subjective and purely human. They presuppose as unquestioned that human beings, through the subjectivity of their thinking, are undeniably at the *center* of the world, and that the "world," here conceived as the sum-total of beings (objects) in their Being, is merely a result and "function" of human representation. The said objections presuppose both that we know what the human being is, and that this conception of the world as our "representation" is unquestionable. Not only are these presuppositions historically determined, they are also phenomenologically and

ontologically reductive with respect to the essence of life in general, whether human, animal, or other. In the remainder of this chapter, we shall try to indicate how Heidegger's account of animal life in the 1929–30 course undermines such subjectivity by shifting our perspective away from any supposed "interiority" of life and toward a transformed conception of *world*.

If the Being of animals and that of humans were absolutely other, such otherness would of course not even be conceivable. The otherness of the animal remains, as Hegel would say, an otherness "for us." (How this "we" is to be determined can remain an open question for now; Heidegger's understanding of the Being of the human being is not that proposed by Hegel.) It is an otherness that is manifest within the element of the Same, the element of *Being*, an element which in the 1929–30 course is thought under the title *world*.⁷ Thus, in claiming that, for animals and humans respectively, "Seeing and seeing are not the same thing" (320), Heidegger is not claiming that there are *no* grounds whatsoever for comparison. It is a question, rather, of drawing critical distinctions that are first enabled by a certain underlying sameness, a sameness that is not to be conceived ontically (in terms of the underlying similarity of two entities) but ontologically, in terms of ways of Being, and in relation to world. In the case of seeing, for example, the seeing of animals and that of humans manifests a sameness in that both are evidently *ways of apprehending something* (using the word *apprehending* very loosely here), and as such, ways of Being and of being in relation to other entities in the world. This does not preclude the possibility and even necessity of making distinctions with respect to the *way* in which something is apprehended in each case. (Heidegger will even claim that the animal does not "apprehend" anything, in a more strictly defined sense.)

In order to help clarify the grounds on which a comparison between the different ways of Being of animal and human is possible, let us turn to the framework of the proposed "comparative examination." Heidegger's initial discussion of this issue, which occurs before the preliminary analysis of the organism and its organs, already brings to bear certain insights that will be decisive for addressing the question of access to beings other than ourselves.

The stone is "worldless" (*weltlos*); the animal is "poor in world" (*weltarm*); humans are "world-forming" (*weltbildend*): three "theses" which Heidegger proposes in order to frame his inquiry into

world (263). The three theses recall the possibility and perhaps even the necessity of distinguishing between humans, animals, and inanimate objects as fundamentally different kinds of entity. However obscure their grounds, these distinctions initially appear self-evident for us. Yet in terms of what criteria do we make such distinctions? Heidegger first considers the relation between the second and third theses: the animal is poor in world; man is world-forming. If by *world* we mean something like the accessibility of other beings, then what the theses are proposing seems straightforward: Humans have greater access to other entities, their world is richer, it encompasses a greater range of accessibility; the animal has less access, it is "poor" in world compared to the richness of the human world. Yet may we simply understand poverty here as being intrinsically of lesser significance with respect to richness? Is the human a higher being than the animal? The reverse might well be true, notes Heidegger. Especially if we stop to compare the discriminatory capacity of a falcon's eye with that of a human being, or ponder the fact that "the human being can sink lower than any animal. . . . No animal can become so deprived as a human being" (286). Yet the fact that human existence bears ethical responsibility, and could in this sense be said to be "higher," need not be taken to imply that the human world is intrinsically more perfect or complete, or of intrinsically greater significance, but indicates only its radical otherness. All of which initially indicates only that "the criterion according to which we talk of height and depth in this connection is obscure" (286).

The thesis of poverty in world as characterizing the animal indeed suggests, according to Heidegger, that animals are in some way deprived of world, yet such deprivation must not be taken as equivalent to having no world whatsoever. This becomes clear via a comparison with the first thesis, which depicts the stone as worldless. At the same time, the comparison helps us to understand positively the phenomenon of world as the accessibility of beings as such. We may say that the stone is worldless, that it has no world: This means that in principle it has no access to those beings in whose midst it is located. The stone may be in contact with the ground, but does not touch it in the way that the lizard sitting on the stone touches the stone. Above all, Heidegger emphasizes, neither of these ways of "touching" is the same as "that touching which we experience when we rest our hand upon the head of another human

being" (290). For the earth upon which the stone rests is not given *for* the stone; the stone has no access to anything *other* that surrounds it. The stone has no access to other beings. It gives no sign that other beings are present for it in any way.

In the case of the animal, the situation is more complicated. Whereas the surface upon which the stone rests is not accessible to the stone at all, the rock on which the lizard sits is indeed given in a certain way for the lizard—but, Heidegger hypothesizes, it is not given to the lizard "*as a rock.*" This does not mean that it is given as something other than itself, but means: "not accessible *as a being* [*als Seiendes*]" (291–92). The thesis that the animal is poor in world, then, cannot mean that it is altogether without access to other beings. "Its *way of Being*, which we call '*living*,' is not *without access* to what is around it . . ." (292). The animal is not utterly deprived of world, if "world" means the *accessibility of beings*. To this extent we must say that the animal in some sense "has" world. On the other hand, if poverty in world indicates a deprivation, and deprivation means "not having," then it seems that the animal does not have world. Yet is the conception of world being used in the same sense when we say that the animal has, and yet does not have, "world"? It seems not. When we say that the animal "has world" then we mean world as the accessibility of beings, as some kind of openness for encountering other beings in general. This sense of world would therefore encompass both humans and animals as living beings. When we say that the animal does not "have world," we mean that it does not have access to other beings *in the way that humans do* or in the way that "we" do. Yet this makes it highly problematic as to whether the thesis that the animal is poor in world can be a coherent thesis at all.

These reflections on accessibility serve initially to indicate the *fundamentally different ways of Being* that pertain to the human being, the animal, and the stone. They have, Heidegger tells us, the sole purpose of eliminating the naive approach that might think we were concerned with three beings "all present at hand in exactly the same way" (296). Human beings, animals, and stones are indeed all beings that appear and are present at hand *within* the world. Yet their respective *ways of Being*, which in each case include a certain presence-at-hand (or possible presence-at-hand, at least for us), are not at all identical (*gleich*). These comparative (*vergleichende*) considerations help to highlight both proximity and