

A Hermeneutics of *Life*? The Absence of *De Anima* in Heidegger's Book Project on Aristotle (the so-called 'Natorp Bericht')

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“Vermutlich ist für uns von allem Seienden, das ist, das Lebe-wesen am schwersten zu denken, weil es uns einerseits in gewisser Weise am nächsten verwandt ist und andererseits doch zugleich durch einen Abgrund von unserem ex-istenten Wesen geschieden ist“ (*Brief über den Humanismus, Wegmarken*, 2d ed. [Frankfurt am

Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978], 323)

In *Sein und Zeit* Martin Heidegger provides the following justification for not considering non-human life in fundamental ontology. “Life is a peculiar way of being, but essentially accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life develops by way of a privative interpretation; it determines what must be so that such a thing as just-living [Nur-Noch-Leben] can be. Life is neither pure being-present-at-hand [Vorhandensein] nor is it Dasein. Dasein is in turn never to be determined ontologically in such a way that one posits it as life—(ontologically undetermined) and in addition something else.”ⁱ This means, as Heidegger will also state the point, that the ontology of Dasein *comes before* the ontology of life (247). The purely privative interpretation of life Heidegger suggests here is one he will himself try to carry out in the 1929/30 course *Basic Concepts of Metaphysics*. Heidegger's interpretation of life in that course

has come under much critique and will also be criticized here.ⁱⁱ H.-G. Gadamer's discussion of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology in *Truth and Method* notes that the life of the animal (and, Gadamer adds, of the child!) remains an ontological problem for Heidegger since their "way of being in each case does not have the sense of 'existence' and historicity that Heidegger claims for human being" (Seinsweise ist jedenfalls nicht in dem Sinne 'Existenz' und Geschichtlichkeit, wie Heidegger das für das menschliche Dasein in Anspruch nimmt, 248-49/267). He continues: "There is no doubt that Heidegger's own transcendental grounding of fundamental ontology in the analytic of Dasein did not yet grant a positive development of the way of being of life" (Kein Zweifel, daß Heideggers eigene transzendente Grundlegung der Fundamentalontologie in der Analytik des Dasein eine positive Entfaltung der Seinsart des Lebens noch nicht gestattete, 249-250/268). But what I wish to show here is how Heidegger's own reading of Aristotle's *De Anima* in early seminars makes the position expressed in *Being and Time*, in brief, that any hermeneutics that is not of *human* life can be only negative or privative, not at all self-evident or necessary. Indeed, the contrary view to that just stated will be defended by one of the students who attended Heidegger's seminars on *De Anima*, Hans Jonas, when in his book, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001), speaks of the need for "a philosophical biology without which there cannot be a philosophy of man on the one hand and a philosophy of nature on the other . . ." (92).ⁱⁱⁱ Another student who attended and took notes on Heidegger's seminars, Oskar Becker, has also objected to Heidegger's privative interpretation of life, arguing that human being must be interpreted not only as *Dasein* but also within the broader category of *Dawesen* shared with anything encountered bodily.^{iv}

First a little history of Heidegger's early reading of Aristotle is required, one in which the so-called 'Natorp Bericht', i.e., the prospectus for a book on Aristotle Heidegger wrote in the autumn of 1922 in the context of his candidacy for a position at Marburg, represents not the beginning but a major *turning-point* that will lead to the position expressed in *Being and Time*. Heidegger's very first seminar on Aristotle delivered in SS1921 was devoted to a reading of *De Anima*, specifically book 2, along with a supporting reading of *Metaphysics Z* on *ousia*.^v The theme of the seminar is the ontology of life. Heidegger asks at its start, "What connection is there such that psychology should arise in philosophy? How is psychology built into the philosophy of Aristotle?"^{vi} Heidegger has in mind here Aristotle's own claim at the start of *De Anima* that "It seems that knowledge of it [the soul] will contribute greatly to all truth, especially in relation to nature" (402a4-6). Heidegger further claims at the outset that *the biological* is the beginning of knowledge for Aristotle (Weiss, 2) In another seminar of WS1922-23 Heidegger continued the development of an ontology of life through a reading of *De Anima* III 9 that eventually transitions to a reading of *Nicomachean Ethics* VI for the seminar's continuation in SS1923.^{vii} Here we find Heidegger claiming, for example, that "All ontological distinctions grow out of a determinate ontology of life" (Weiss 27) and that the latter receives its "primitive direction" from the primal phenomenon (Urphänomen) that is the plant growing in all directions (22). It is immediately before the start of this WS1922-23 seminar that Heidegger wrote the *Natorp Bericht*. Indeed, the seminar begins just like the *Bericht* with an "Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation [indication of the hermeneutical situation]" defined in terms of the three moments of Blickstand, Blickrichtung and Blickweite (Weiss 1; '*Blickweite*' is '*Sichtweite*' in the *Bericht*, GA62, 346-7). And if in the seminar Heidegger claims that for

Aristotle philosophy is ontology and logic, Heidegger makes the same claim for his own philosophy in the *Bericht* (GA62, 364).

Yet in the context of the reading of *De Anima* carried in the seminars of SS1921 and WS1922-23, the *Natorp Bericht* represents a significant departure since it drops *De Anima* as a text of special focus for the projected book on Aristotle. The book is outlined as follows: a first part divided into three sections, i) *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, ii) *Metaphysics* A 1 and 2, ii) *Physics* A-E, and a second part focused on the interpretation of *Metaphysics* Z H Θ. Heidegger's own seminars given in SS1921 and, contemporaneously with the *Natorp Bericht*, in WS1922-23 would suggest starting with *De Anima* in the first half before turning to the *Ethics*, i.e., starting with the ontology of life before focusing on the ontology of human life. Yet, as we see, *De Anima* is completely absent from the outline.

This is not to say that *De Anima* is completely absent from the *Natorp Bericht*. In the context of telling us that the second half will focus on showing how Aristotle in developing the problem of being is led to the 'categories' of *dunamis* and *energeia*, Heidegger writes that "The 'ethics' will be placed in this ontological horizon as the explication of beings as being-human, human life, the movement of life" (GA62, 397). We thus have the *Ethics* as discussed in the first half of the book being placed in the ontological context uncovered in the second half. But it is here unexpectedly that *De Anima* is introduced, having played no part in the first half of the book: "This will be worked out in such a way that first *De anima*, and indeed on the broad basis of the explication of the ontological region of *life* as a determinate movedness (interpretation of *De motu animalium*), is interpreted with regard to its ontological-logical constitution" (397). If the ontology of human life in the *Ethics* must be preceded by an interpretation of *the being of*

life as such in *De Anima*, why is not a section of the projected book's first half, indeed its first section, devoted to the latter work? Why does the book not follow the trajectory of Heidegger's own contemporaneous seminar, moving from the interpretation of *De Anima* to the interpretation of *Ethics* VI? Why instead does Heidegger's introduction in the *Natorp Bericht* use the term 'life' to refer exclusively to human life, as we will see? And why is *De Anima* mentioned only now in the summary of the second part of the book that does not even have this text as a focus? At best, *De Anima*, and the phenomenon of life as such that is its topic, is being marginalized here.^{viii} Indeed, after the *Natorp Bericht* this text will disappear from Heidegger's reading of Aristotle as the phenomenon of life as such also disappears from his thought.^{ix}

By the time he writes *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger has decided to avoid the term 'Leben' altogether, along with 'Mensch', in designating the beings that we ourselves are and assures us that this is not motivated by any terminological idiosyncrasy (46). On the other hand, he does not deny that the 'philosophy of life' presupposes an implicit tendency towards the understanding of the being of Dasein, to the extent that Heidegger compares talk of a "philosophy of life" to talk of a "botany of plants". The problem, he adds, is that 'life' has not been made into an ontological problem. But the avoidance of the term 'life' here except for occasional references to beings that in contrast to Dasein are 'only-living', itself clearly fails to make 'life' into an explicit ontological problem.^x

If we return to the *Natorp Bericht*, we see that Heidegger there in contrast explicitly argues that we should not set aside the word 'life' on account of its confusing multiplicity of meanings: "Die verwirrende Vieldeutigkeit des Wortes 'Leben' und seiner Verwendung dar

nicht der Anlaß werden, es einfach abzusetzen" (GA62, 351). On the contrary, in doing so one would deprive oneself of the possibility of penetrating to the kind of object intended in each case by following the different directions of meaning. But then he adds: "To that end it is necessary to hold fundamentally in view that the term ζωή, *vita*, signifies a fundamental phenomenon in which are focused the New Testament-Christian and the Greek-Christian interpretation of human existence" (Dazu ist grundsätzlich im Auge zu behalten, daß der Terminus ζωή, *vita*, ein Grundphänomenon bedeutet, in dem die griechische, die alttestamentliche, die neutestamentlich-christliche und die griechisch-christliche Interpretation menschlichen Daseins zentrierten, 352).^{xi} We see in this passage that, if the term 'Leben' is retained in the Natorp Bericht, it is so at the cost of a great narrowing of the term's scope. In speaking of the need to hold in view the fundamental phenomenon designated by the term ζωή, Heidegger in the passage proceeds to speak of the Greek and Christian interpretation of *human life*. But clearly the fundamental phenomenon designated by the word ζωή is *life as such* and its multiplicity of meanings includes the different ways in which living things are said to be alive. This fundamental phenomenon of life and the different ways in which it is spoken, what we will see Aristotle call its πολλαχῶς λεγομένον, is the topic of *De Anima* and thus the focus of Heidegger's first seminar on Aristotle. If this text is absent from the interpretation of Aristotle projected by the Natorp Bericht, with the puzzling and seemingly incidental exception noted above, this is because the phenomenon of life as such is absent from Heidegger's intention in this text. If in the *Natorp Bericht*, in contrast to *Sein und Zeit*, he continues to use the word 'Leben', it is always to refer exclusively to *human existence*. There is little indication in the Natorp Bericht that there is such a thing as *non-human life*. Heidegger formulates thus the

guiding question of his Aristotle interpretation: “as what kind of objecthood of what ontological character is being-human, ‘being alive’, experienced and interpreted?” (*als welche Gegenständlichkeit welchen Seinscharakters ist das Menschsein, das ,im Leben Sein‘ erfahren und ausgelegt?*, GA62, 372; italics in original).^{xii}

Against the last objection in the passage from *Sein und Zeit* with which we began, i.e., that Dasein cannot be determined ontologically as ‘life’ with the addition of something else, what we find in *De Anima* is not a univocal conception of ‘life’ to which we would need to ‘add’ something else (like ‘reason’) in giving account of ‘human life’. Both Aristotle and Heidegger’s own reading insist that ‘life’ is not a univocal concept, but rather is ‘said in different ways’. While Aristotle defines *in outline* (τύπω, 413a9) the soul or the principle of life in the first chapter of Book 2 as the form or first *entelecheia* (the active possession of a capability rather than its exercise) of a body with the potential for life (i.e., possessing organs), he is forced to take a new start in chapter two by the fact that living is spoken of in many different ways (πλεοναχῶς δὲ τοῦ ζῆν λεγομένου, 413a22-23). Nourishment, growth and decay, perception, thinking, locomotion, are all different ways of living and different meanings of the verb ‘to live’. Therefore a specific *logos* (ἴδιος λόγος) is required for each of these, interpreting each capacity in terms of its activity and its activity in terms of its object. Divorced from such specific accounts a common definition, such as that provided in the first chapter, would, Aristotle affirms, be *ridiculous* (γελοῖον, 414b25). The common account is not the specific account of any of the ways of living, but it must ‘harmonize’ (ἐφαρμόσει, 414b23) with all of them if it is to have any validity whatsoever. In the July 5 class of the 1921 seminar Heidegger discusses this part of Aristotle’s text. He interprets the characterization of the common account in the first chapter of

Book 2 as being only an 'outline' as signifying that it is only "an anticipatory indication, a sign" (Weiss, 11). He notes that we have a multiplicity of ἴδια, i.e., specific ways of living, with which the general account can only 'harmonize' (12). Heidegger even claims that in the case of the different ways of living "general talk makes no sense" (13). He continues with his commentary in the next class of July 19, now citing at the outset Aristotle's claim that asking for a *koinotatos logos*, at least without the specific accounts, would be 'laughable' (13). Heidegger then proceeds to ask the crucial question: "Does there then remain a general concept amidst the particular modes of life? . . . How does the κοινότατος λόγος relate to the ἴδια? Duality and unity! Here is a problem that is not decided in philosophy up to the present day {!}" (14). He proceeds to lay out Aristotle's answer: what makes it possible for there to be a common account that 'harmonizes' with the different particular ways of living, what prevents, in other words, 'living' from being simply homonymous, is that these different ways of living "are in a determinate order and succession (τὰ ἐφεξῆς)" (14).^{xiii} As Aristotle notes, the perceptive capacity presupposes the nutritive capacity, the noetic and locomotive capacities presuppose the perceptive capacity. This is the reason why, as Heidegger notes, Aristotle compares the case of defining the soul with the case of defining 'figure': there are different figures and no general account of figure could be the specific account of any figure, but what makes the 'harmonizing' of a general account possible is that the different figures exist in a certain order or succession: e.g., the triangle is implied by the quadrilateral. Heidegger thus comments of the different senses of living: "Thus a determinate mode of founding. The preceding is always the condition of possibility for the following (possibility = the possible working-itself-out)" (14).

But then do all the different senses of life point to the way of living that characterizes human beings? This is the inference Heidegger draws: “What he [Aristotle] actually has in mind is the human being in which all capabilities are concretely present” (14).^{xiv} We may have here the justification for the position to be taken in the *Natorp Bericht*: that we can simply equate life with human life. But this is where we need to be careful. Aristotle does say human beings in possessing the capacity of thought possess all the other capacities too (415a9-10). But these capacities do not simply exist separately and side by side in a human being; on the contrary, to say that higher capacities presuppose the lower ones is to say they form a unity.^{xv} Even if human living is primary in the sense of including and unifying all the capacities, it is still distinct from the life of a plant or the life of any other animal, it is still only *one* meaning of the word ‘to live’, just as *ousia*, if the primary sense of being, remains only *one* of the ways in which being is spoken to which the others cannot be reduced.^{xvi} The order and succession here, and the common account it makes possible, does not eliminate the multiplicity of living. It is also significant that Aristotle, when he claims that the reasoning capacity includes the other capacities, qualifies that this is true for perishable living things (φθαρτῶν, 415a9). The reason is clearly that in an imperishable living thing like the unmoved mover the reasoning capacity does not presuppose the other capacities. Life extends beyond human life ‘upwards’ as well as ‘downwards’. Indeed, it has been argued by a number of commentators, and I believe rightly, that if we have in the case of life a ‘pros-hen equivocation’, i.e., where the different meanings of the word ‘life’ refer to a primary meaning, the primary meaning is to be found in the contemplative activity of god.^{xvii} In this case, human life is not even the focal point of the different meanings of life: if the lives of different plants and animals can be said in their

differences to approximate in varying degrees a primary instance of living, that primary instance is divine and humans are to be found simply in the continuum pointing in that direction along with plants and animals. On Aristotle's view, then, neither are the other forms of life to be interpreted privatively from the perspective of human life (we cannot understand the latter independently of these other forms of life) nor is human life to be interpreted as 'life plus some additional capacity' (human life is a unified way of living in which the different identifiable capacities do not exist separately). Indeed, from this perspective, Heidegger's later reference in *Sein und Zeit* to beings that are *just-living* ("Nur-lebenden") is nonsensical and ridiculous; for Aristotle in *De Anima*, and for Heidegger's own reading of this text, there is no such thing as 'just-living'.^{xviii} In short, the ontology of life in *De Anima* avoids both of the extreme positions alone recognized in the passage from *Sein und Zeit*.

That Aristotle himself does not interpret life 'privatively' from being-human is shown by the very existence of his extensive biological works. These works are almost entirely ignored by Heidegger's reading of Aristotle and it is indeed hard to know what he could make of them given the opposition he maintains, so clear in *Sein und Zeit*, between biology and philosophy understood as an ontology of Dasein. How would he characterize Aristotle's 'philosophical biology'? For all its detail, this biology clearly is not the 'positivistic science' that Heidegger contrasts with metaphysics.^{xix} Biology and ontology are so far from being fundamentally opposed in Aristotle that a prominent interpreter, Aryeh Kosman, could speak of "Aristotle's biological ontology" and "Aristotle's biological metaphysics", and is not alone among recent interpreters to do so.^{xx} If one cannot find in the biological writings an ontology of 'the animal', that is because there is for Aristotle no such thing as 'the animal'. There exists a large variety of

different animals which are unified *only analogically* through correspondences in their parts and functions.^{xxi} In the *Parts of Animals* Aristotle states the important principle that guides the work, i.e., that “in the many animals what is common is so by analogy” (Barnes trans. τὰ γὰρ πολλὰ ζῶα ἀνάλογον ταὐτὸ πέπονθεν, 644a23-24). Likewise, later in referring to the things common to all animals, he explains that ‘common’ here is ‘by analogy’ (τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔχουσι τὸ κοινὸν κατ’ἀναλογίαν, 645b26-27). *And human beings are only one term in these analogical relations,^{xxii} even if a privileged term.^{xxiii}* The biological writings not only do not treat of ‘the animal’ in the singular, but they also do not treat of ‘animals’ as opposed to human beings. Humans are discussed along with birds, dolphins and elephants in their analogical correspondences and their differences. This means—and this is a crucial point—there is in Aristotle *no ontology of human existence as opposed to ‘animals’*. When the ontological principles of *dunamis* and *energeia* are employed to understand the *generation of animals* in the biological work with that title we find not the slightest distinction between animals and humans. Heidegger’s claim in the *Natorp Bericht* to find an ontology of the human being in the *Nicomachean Ethics* requires not only that we disregard “the ethical problematic”, as Heidegger says,^{xxiv} but also *that we exclude from consideration Aristotle’s biological writings.^{xxv}* Aristotle’s ‘ontology of the human being’ is simply his ontology of life and Aristotle’s focus on human beings in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is due entirely to what Heidegger calls the ‘ethical problematic’ and has nothing to do with ontology.

The qualification above that the biological writings are ‘almost entirely ignored’ by Heidegger is due to the fact that in the early seminars on *De Anima* he does cite, and gives much importance to, a passage from *De motu animalium.^{xxvi}* The passage, the importance of

which for Heidegger is shown by the fact that it is cited in full in the 1922/23 seminar, is the following:

For all living things both move and are moved for the sake of something, so that this is for them the limit of all motion: the for-the-sake-of. We see that the things that move the living being are thought and imagination and choice and wish and desire. All of these can be led back to apprehension (νοῦς) and striving (ὄρεξις). For imagination and perception occupy the same place as apprehension. *For all of these are discriminating* (κριτικά, emphasis in transcript), they differ according to the differences spoken of elsewhere . . . (700b15-22; cited in the 1922/23 seminar, Weiss, 18).

What we have here, and what Heidegger seeks here, is an account of the motion that characterizes all life as such on the basis of which we can interpret the movement that characterizes human life in particular. Heidegger indeed refers to the passage in connection with his claim that “for every living being its world is there” and is there for a κρίνειν where the word here does not mean ‘judging’ but more fundamentally ‘lifting out’, ‘taking out’ (*‘abheben, herausfassen’*, Weiss 17). Referring to the passage again later he observes: “Something is already there as unconcealed for the living being. The world is there insofar as the living thing is itself something that lifts out (abhebt). Only a determinate region of the world is lifted out; the rest remains dark. Life has in itself this meaning, that in going around it makes visible what before was hidden, makes it available in its being” (Weiss, 23). As one sees from these observations, Aristotle’s account of the movement of animals is interpreted as an account of the movement that defines living things in their being in a world. Neither Aristotle nor Heidegger’s interpretation here make a fundamental distinction between the being-in-the-

world of humans and that of other animals. Of this account of the movement of animals and its importance we have only a trace in the Natorp Bericht in that cryptic and passing reference we saw to the “interpretation of *De motu animalium*” (GA62, 397). Yet neither this text nor the phenomenon that it deals with is made an explicit part of the plan of Heidegger’s projected book.^{xxvii} Instead, much of the introduction to the Natorp Bericht could be characterized as Heidegger’s attempt to find in Aristotle’s *Ethics* a *de motu hominum* that Aristotle not only did not write but would in principle have seen no reason to write.

In the *Natorp Bericht* Heidegger indeed justifies the claim that the object of philosophical investigation is *human existence* in the way he does in *Sein und Zeit*, i.e., with the claim that the human being exists in the manner of being concerned with its own being (“das in *der Weise* ist, daß es in der konkreten Zeitigung seines Seins um sein Sein besorgt ist”, 10; GA62, 349). It is important to note, however, that this concern with its own being characterizes *life as such* for Heidegger while he reads *De Anima*. Thus, in the very first class of his 1922/23 seminar on *De Anima* Heidegger asserts: “*Life is a being for whom being is an issue (Leben ist ein Seiendes, dem es ankommt auf Sein, Weiss 3)*. In this case, human existence would be only a modification of this tendency that characterizes the being of life as such, rather than being a radically different kind of being to which life is accessible only privatively.

If we now turn briefly to the 1929/30 course we can easily see just how far Heidegger was led away from his reading of *De Anima* and his attempt to understand there the phenomenon of life as such. While we have seen in the earlier seminars *having-a-world* being taken to characterize life as such, the privative interpretation in the later course leads to a characterization of animal life as *poor-in-world*.^{xxviii} This language might suggest that animals

have a world, just to a lesser degree than humans, but Heidegger insists that this is not the meaning: instead the point is that animals *have no world at all*: “the animal essentially cannot have world at all” (269; GA29/30, 391); “the not-having of world is not merely a case of having less of world in comparison with man, but rather a case of not having at all—but now in the sense of a not-having, i.e., on the basis of a having” (270; 392).^{xxxix} How then do animals differ from the worldless rock? Only in that they *lack* world while a rock cannot even be said to *lack* world. Not surprisingly, the privative interpretation results in a purely negative characterization of the being of life as simply the *lack* of what we human beings *have*.^{xxx} While Heidegger insists that this lack, this not-having, is also the having of a certain openness, this ‘having’ can still be understood only negatively as a not-having. Why, otherwise, would Heidegger use the word ‘poverty’ in the first place as the one word with which to designate the animal’s relation to world?^{xxxi} Furthermore, we cannot even say that we have here an attempt to account for the “being of life” since *plants* are only mentioned in passing and otherwise ignored and in the end even excluded: Heidegger describes his aim as “*characterizing the essence of life, if only with particular reference to the animal*” (212; 310).^{xxxii} What then is the plant’s relation to world?^{xxxiii} Is it the lack of a lack, or is that instead the rock which cannot even be said to lack world?^{xxxiv} In short, *what in the world* is the difference between a plant and a rock? These questions do not even arise for Aristotle, since for him plants and animals and even rocks are to be found on a continuum with no sharp breaks or gaps: “For nature passes from lifeless objects to animals in such unbroken sequence [συνεχῶς], interposing between them beings which live and yet are not animals, that scarcely any difference seems to exist between two neighboring groups owing to their close proximity” (681a12-15). For Heidegger here, in contrast, there is no continuum,

but only breaks, indeed abysses. We have the opposition between the being-present-at-hand of the rock and the existing of Dasein, with the being of life opposed to both and accessible at all only via this opposition, which means not at all accessible *in itself*. Given that the being of the animal is reduced to privation, it should not surprise us that the being of the plant is reduced to *nothing at all*. There is no continuum in Heidegger between the lifeless rock and the human being because there is *positively speaking nothing at all between them: only negation*. In comparison to the rock life is *absent* and in comparison to Dasein it is *non-existent*.^{xxxv}

Heidegger must conclude his lengthy account of strictly animal life in the 1929/30 course with the acknowledgement that it has not even attempted to explain the *specific motility* that characterizes life (265; 385): what Heidegger calls the “peculiar sort of movedness [Bewegtheit einer Art]” that “determines the being of the animal as such [das Sein des Tieres als solches bestimmt]”. Even more surprisingly, he admits that he has intentionally *avoided* the question here (266; 387): “In our task of determining the essence of the organism we intentionally kept far from us the question of the movedness that characterizes life as such” (Mit Absicht wurde in unserer Aufgabe der Wesensbestimmung des Organismus die Frage nach dem Bewegtheitscharakter des Lebendigen als solchen ferngehalten)! This avoidance dates back to the *Natorp Bericht* since, as we have seen, Heidegger did not avoid the question in his reading of *De Anima*. Indeed, as we have seen, the *de motu animalium* in particular was interpreted by Heidegger as providing precisely this account of the movedness that characterizes life as such and *De Anima* was read as developing this account.

What is indeed harder to explain than the relative absence of *De Anima* from the *Natorp Bericht* is its complete absence from the 1929/30 course even when Heidegger introduces there

conclusions he in 1921 found in *De Anima*. The most important of these conclusions are 1) that the capacity that defines an animal is one that does not leave itself in exercising itself but remains proper to itself (i.e., its exercise is not an ‘alteration’; 233; 340)^{xxxvi} and 2) that what belongs to the animal’s ‘being-actual’ (Wirklichsein) is its ‘being-capable’ (Fähigsein) (235), though Heidegger significantly adds that this is what belongs to “the essence of life,” thus pointing to the broader scope of *De Anima*.^{xxxvii} Heidegger in the 1921 seminar arrives at these conclusions primarily through his reading of *De Anima* II 5. Here Aristotle, in the context of discussing sensation in general as one of the *dunameis* defining the soul, characterizes what senses (τὸ αἰσθητικὸν) as a being-capable and not a being-actual (οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνεργεία, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει μόνον, 417a7-8). We might then be tempted to say that when the capability of the sense is activated it *undergoes something* (πάσχειν) and *is altered* (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι). When a leaf that is green but is capable of becoming red actually becomes red, *it ceases to be green*. What it was prior to having its capability to be red actualized is destroyed by the actualization. But Aristotle’s crucial point in this chapter is that this is *not* what happens when the capability of sensation is activated. In going from being-capable of seeing to actually seeing (i.e., when a visible object activates it), the sense is *not altered, does not undergo any change*, does not cease to be what it was before the act of sensation. On the contrary, in having its capability activated the sense first *becomes fully what it is, is fulfilled in its being*. Aristotle expresses this difference by writing that what we have in the case of sensation is not a *destruction* (φθόρα) as we do in normal ‘alteration’ (e.g., the greenness of the leaf capable of becoming red is destroyed when it becomes actually red), but rather a *preservation* (σωτηρία, 417b3-4): the sense is nothing but the capability of sensation and this capability is *preserved* in being affected

by the actual sensible object. Nothing is being altered or really affected in the latter case, so that Aristotle can conclude that ‘alteration’ and ‘being-affected’ are not the proper terms here (κυρίως ὀνόμασιν, 418a4) but are used only for want of better alternatives.

Heidegger in 1921 fully sees the significance of what Aristotle claims here: the kind of actualization of a capability that characterizes living things is *sui generis* and *radically distinct from the kind of motion and alteration undergone by nonliving things*. Heidegger comments: “σωτηρία: the happening-with must be a peculiar one and that with which something happens must be in such a way that it first comes to itself. αἰσθήσις is a πάσχειν having to do with σωτηρία” (Weiss 17). Commenting on another passage of the same chapter (417b15ff), Heidegger makes the crucial point even more succinctly: “thus a becoming-other in which that to which something happens comes to itself.” If living is a movement, it is a very peculiar movement: one in which what moves does not leave behind what it was in becoming something other, but rather returns to what it was, preserves what it is in becoming other.^{xxxviii} In being affected by the things around it, the living being is not changed or altered, but on the contrary preserves itself as a being-capable. It is a capability that in exercising itself preserves itself.^{xxxix}

It is indeed precisely this that makes a living thing *a self*. In another part of the 1921 seminar, and in the context of commenting on the soul’s character of being a *dunamis*, Heidegger observes: “It has often been noted as a peculiar fact that the ‘I’ of contemporary psychology does not appear in Aristotle. Upon closer inspection, however, it is everywhere there, but only in the guise of δύναμις – the I-can and it-can, a form of objecthood, therefore, that has as a fundamental determination that it can. Thereby an indication of the objecthood of

all modes of living” (Weiss, 13). Note that here the ‘I’ in the guise of δύνναμις, the ‘I-can’ and ‘it-can’ (not fundamentally distinguished here as the Becker transcript notes), indicates the objecthood of *all* modes of living. Heidegger accordingly also claims that “the fundamental representation of self-moving must be held onto; it is everywhere in the phenomenon of life” (13). In both the 1921 and the 1922/23 seminars, Heidegger therefore does not ignore plants. He instead characterizes in the earlier seminar the ability of plants to grow in every direction as “the fundamental meaning of everything biological, even if completely primitively” (Weiss 12),^{xl} while in the later seminar, as already noted, he identifies this as the “primal phenomenon” from which ontology receives its “primitive direction.” The contrast here is with the rock which moves in only one direction: significantly, given that the plant disappears between the rock and the animal in the 1929/30 course.

To show that the direction in which Heidegger’s reading of *De Anima* takes him is not fruitless, but on the contrary is arguably more fruitful than that taken in the 1929/30 course, we can put together from Heidegger’s reading an account of the specific movement that defines the being of life of which human life would be a modification: *Life is a self-movement in multiple directions that in this exercise of its ‘it can’ never leaves itself nor becomes other than itself, being always, in its very being, in possession of its end (entelecheia)*. Such an account of course does not oppose life to human existence, does not open up what Heidegger in 1929/30 claims to be an “abyss” between “the animal” and “the human” (264; 384: when the animal cannot apprehend something *as* being, “dann ist das Tier durch einen Abgrund vom Menschen getrennt”). But this is arguably all for the better. And in the early seminars, the oppositions that open up after the Natorp Bericht and become abysses by the time of the 1929/30 course are

simply not there. We can consider in concluding two examples implied in the definition of life just given: the notions of 'self' and of 'care'.

As we have just seen, Heidegger claimed in his seminars on *De Anima* that *self*-moving must be held onto as the phenomenon present everywhere in life. The point is expressed much later by one of his students, Hans Jonas, when he claims that the term 'self' is "unavoidable in any description of the most elementary instance of life" (2001, 82).^{xli} One can also cite here Gadamer who observes: "The living, which means life, is however characterized by the two puzzles of self-movement and the relation to self in the form of awareness, of the inner-being of all awareness, of all perceptions, which is inseparable from any sensible experience."^{xlii} In contrast, in the 1929/30 course, Heidegger is at pains to show that animals are not 'selves' and this arguably at the cost of fundamental incoherence. He tells us, immediately after noting that "there is no avoiding the self-like character of capacity, i.e., its instinctual and intrinsic self-proposing", that he is nevertheless reserving the word 'self' to "the *specifically human peculiarity*". Why? The only justification we are given is that the animal lacks 'personality', 'reflection' and 'consciousness' (233; 340), *as if having these is what it means to be a self on Heidegger's own account of Dasein in Being and Time*. The notion of 'self' is clearly being narrowed here to justify its refusal to 'animals'. In being-capable the animal retains itself, remains with itself, but Heidegger insists, this "has nothing to do with the selfhood of a human being comporting him- or herself as a person . . ." (239; 347). Here we see clearly the two hermeneutical directions that can be taken: you either seek to understand self-relation as a phenomenon distinctive of all life including human life or you arbitrarily restrict the term 'self' to human beings and attempt to describe all non-human life privatively and globally as *not that*

or as *poor in that*.^{xliii} In the 1921 seminar on *De Anima* Heidegger takes the first direction while after the *Natorp Bericht* he takes the second.

Finally, while the ontological concept of *care* is originally developed by Heidegger to understand the being of life as such, in both the *Natorp Bericht* and *Sein und Zeit* it is restricted to human existence. Thus we read in the latter that ‘tendency’ (Hang) and ‘urge’ (*Drang*) “are grounded in care insofar as they can be at all shown in Dasein. This does not rule out that urge and tendency ontologically constitute also beings that are only ‘alive’ (gründen, sofern sie im Dasein überhaupt rein ausweisbar sind, in der Sorge. Das schließt nicht aus, daß Drang und Hang ontologisch auch Seiendes konstituieren, das nur ‚lebt‘, 194). As for how to understand urge and tendency apart from ‘care’ (*Sorge*), that again requires, Heidegger insists, a ‘privative interpretation’. When Heidegger is reading *De Anima* in contrast, especially in the 1922/23 seminar in which he focuses on Book 3, chapter 9, and the *kinêsis kata topon* he takes to characterize all life, he understands ‘care’ as a phenomenon distinctive of all life. As he says at one point, “As doing, the living thing lives in caring, in being out towards something” (Als ποιοῦν lebt das ζῶον im Sorgen, im Aussein auf etwas, Nov. 30). He thus refers later also to “the being-caring of life as such” (Sorgendsein des Lebens als solchen). This suggests that what is needed is not that we interpret the urge and tendency that characterize life through *depriving* them of ‘care’ as something distinctly human, but rather that we interpret human ‘care’ positively from the perspective of the ‘care’ that characterizes all life as such.

Even if in the 1922/23 seminar we already see a focus on *human life*, which will result in the turn to the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the summer semester, the broader phenomenon of life still remains in view, even in the reading of the latter text. Indeed, it is in the course of reading

Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the summer semester that Heidegger states most emphatically his understanding of the being of *life* as care: “Caring is the way of being of life that is placed originally and genuinely in a world. Life *cannot at all* be other than in a world. That one must see” (Weiss 23). It is also revealing that Heidegger’s reading of the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in another seminar from SS1923, which has as its central focus *caring* (*Sorgen*) as the fundamental way in which human beings *are*, keeps the phenomenon of life and *De Anima* always in view. At one point in his reading of the book Heidegger thus observes: “The human being is now seen in the context of plants, animals, etc. (To make present the ground from which the consideration grows). In the context of beings that live” (Weiss, 22). A little later in speaking of *being-placed-in-a-world* (*Gestelltsein in die Welt*), which he still sees as distinctive of all life (the contrasting example here is the shoe that has no world), he refers for an understanding of this fundamental phenomenon to *De Anima* (Weiss, 22). In the *Natorp Bericht* we do indeed read something like what we find in the 1922/23 seminar: “The fundamental meaning of the factual movedness of life is *caring* (*curare*). In the directed, caring ‘being out towards something’, the object of life’s caring, the respective world, is there” (*Der Grundsinn der faktischen Lebensbewegtheit ist das Sorgen (curare). In dem gerichteten, sorgenden ‘Aussein auf etwas’ ist das Worauf der Sorge des Lebens da, die jeweilige Welt,* GA62, 352). But this is asserted in a context where, as we have seen, ‘factual life’ has been identified with *human* existence.^{xliv} Again, a claim that has been made about the being of life as such is narrowed down to a claim about human life. The *Natorp Bericht* does not go as far as *Sein und Zeit* because it still uses the word ‘life’ and does not explicitly *exclude* nonhuman-life from what is claimed about human life. But the decision there to read the *Nicomachean Ethics*

outside of the context of *De Anima* and the biological writings and thus as an ontology of *human* existence as distinct from an ontology of life already sets Heidegger on the path towards the later ‘privative’ interpretation of ‘just living’.^{xlv}

The seminars on *De Anima* thus appear in retrospect to be a lost opportunity. One could argue that Heidegger’s focus on the conception of life in early Christianity before the turn to Aristotle shows that his focus was always on human existence.^{xlvi} But Aristotle succeeded for a while in enlarging Heidegger’s scope to the phenomenon of life as such.^{xlvii} Once this wider scope was lost with the abandonment of *De Anima* in the *Natorp Bericht*, it could not be retrieved. Indeed, I believe that we must see both Heidegger’s appropriation of the term ‘life’ for human existence in the *Natorp Bericht*, with the exclusion of non-human life this requires, and his opposition of human existence to ‘life’ in *Being and Time*, as an act of violence against living things that exists fully within a tradition traceable from Christianity to Descartes.^{xlviii} That Heidegger’s early reading of *De Anima* made possible a *different direction* only serves to make this violence all the more evident. And in line with this tradition, the violence, as Derrida has suggested, is perpetrated not only against the ‘animals’ that are not us, but also against the ‘animal’ *in us*. In excluding *De Anima* and the biological writings, the project of the *Natorp Bericht* excludes our own—for want of a better word—‘corporeality’.^{xlix} What is missing from the *Natorp Bericht* are not just animals, but, in Derrida’s words, “the animal I myself am.” As for plants, well

ⁱ „Leben ist eine eigene Seinsart, aber wesentlich nur zugänglich im Dasein. Die Ontologie des Lebens vollzieht sich auf dem Wege einer privativen Interpretation; sie bestimmt das, was sein muß, daß so etwas wie Nur-Noch-leben sein kann. Leben ist weder pures Vorhandensein, noch aber auch Dasein. Das Dasein wiederum ist ontologisch nie so zu bestimmen, daß man es ansetzt als Leben—(ontologisch unbestimmt) und als überdies noch etwas anderes“ (50). See also 194: „Die ontologische Grundverfassung von ‚leben‘ ist jedoch ein eigenes Problem und nur auf dem Wege reduktiver Privation aus der Ontologie des Daseins aufzurollen.“ In the 1925/26 course *Logik: die Frage nach*

der Wahrheit Heidegger claims that “the general biological structure of life” can be won only in being understood first as *Daseinsstruktur* (GA21 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976], 215).

ⁱⁱ Two recent books provide a good summation and presentation of the criticisms that have been levelled against Heidegger’s account of animal life in the 1929/30 course and elsewhere, as well as a response to these criticisms: Beth Cykowski, *Heidegger’s Metaphysical Abyss: Between the Human and the Animal* (Oxford University Press, 2021); Maria Agustina Sforza, *Zur Andersheit des Tieres bei Heidegger* (Vittorio Klostermann, 2022). Cykowski attempts to diffuse these criticisms by treating Heidegger’s theses here (including that the animal is “poor in world”) as provocations and asking that we understand them in the wider context of the project carried out in the course. She does not, however, deny his commitment to the ‘abyss’ of the title, even insisting that “the abyss expands and contracts within a certain margin over the course of his works, but it remains intact for the duration of his intellectual life” (5), and even though she acknowledges that “Heidegger seems far more inclined in this earlier work [referring specifically to the SS1924 course] to bring the animal into a close proximity to the human” (6). Cykowski’s claim that Heidegger’s three essential theses are only meant “to reveal the contemporary manner in which metaphysics separates and classifies entities” (105) and that he does not himself “wish to endorse them as essential definitions ‘for all time’” (122) is unconvincing: Cykowski herself does not hesitate to attribute to Heidegger the thesis that “man is world-forming” and in this course this thesis goes along with the thesis that “the animal is poor in world”; furthermore, Cykowski also must acknowledge that Heidegger in other works, and therefore in other contexts, defends as his own the opposition between “the animal as such” and “man” in terms that parallel those of this course. Furthermore, as I note in the main text, Heidegger’s thesis that the animal is poor in world is the necessary outcome of that ‘privative’ interpretation of the animal which he claims in *Being and Time* to be the only one possible. In any case, if Cykowski were right, this would make Heidegger’s neglect of the phenomenon of life even more extreme and surprising than I claim it to be: if he is not defending the account of the animal’s being in the 1929/30 course as his own, then he *nowhere* offers his own account. The approach of Sforza is different: she defends Heidegger against his critics by insisting that his distinction between humans and animals is a purely ontological one (“Unterscheidung von Seinsweisen”, 21). If animals are denied world (she herself notes that animals for Heidegger are not really “poor” in world, but rather lack world altogether: see 48 & 89), are denied language, and are denied the capacity of dying, this is only on the ground that they are incapable of relating to beings *as* beings (see 155, 236-7; 247). But this ontological claim itself is given little explanation or justification. Instead, it is simply assumed as the justification for claims such as that the dog who mistakes for his master someone heard entering the house is not really mistaking one thing for another (how could it when it does not relate to beings *as* this or that? 156-7) or that the crocodile lying silently in the water to ambush its prey is not really relating silently to its prey (because it cannot relate to its prey at all *as* such! 178). Finally, if Sforza is right that Heidegger is not treating animals as deficient humans (96-97) and that insisting on the difference rather than the similarity between us and animals can be a way of acknowledging and respecting the distinctive being of the latter (see 101, 269), this only confronts us again with the question of why Heidegger sees giving an account of the distinctive being of living things as of purely secondary importance and indeed as dispensable; even the most detailed account in the 1929/30 seminar serves only the purpose of explaining *our* being-in-the-world and, on Heidegger’s own admission, does not even try to give an account of the peculiar movement distinctive of the being of life as such (see below).

ⁱⁱⁱ The same argument is made by Renaud Barbaras who speaks of the need for “une démarche *biocentriste*” (62) that would ask “ce que doit être la vie pour que l’homme soit ce qu’il est, *ce que doit être la vie pour que soit possible quelque chose comme le Dasein* » (*Introduction à une phénoménologie de la vie* [Paris : J. Vrin, 2008], 63). The crucial point here is that while in Heidegger’s ontology life falls into the cracks between the being of nature, identified with presence-at-hand, and the being of man, identified with existence, it should instead be the ground on which we understand both, given that man is *a living* being and that living beings are *natural* beings.

^{iv} “Para-Existenz. Menschliches Dasein und Dawesen,” in *Dasein und Dawesen: Gesammelte philosophische Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963), 69-70, 84-85. Becker also notes that for Heidegger ‘nature’ itself can be accessed only privatively (through a process of ‘Entweltlichung der Welt’) and objects that this “läßt aber das Eigenwesen der Natur im Dunkel und verzweifelt gewißermassen grundsätzlich an seiner Erfassbarkeit” (85). It is possible that Heidegger started moving towards the ‘privative’ interpretation of life as early as the beginning of 1922, since in the Weiss notes for the WS1921-22 course and under the class dated January 13, 1922, we find the following passage note to be found in the text of the course published in GA61: “Formal die Gegendständigkeit von Leben bestimmbar als ein Etwas, für das ein Anderes *sein* Anderes ist als seine Welt. Objektiv-formal-

ontologische Mannigfaltigkeit zeigt das nicht; bei uns treten kategorial heraus: Etwas für das, im Für-Sein der Welt, im Für und Gegen sind formal die Strukturen der Bewegtheit des Lebens selbst bestimmt. Hier liegt der Grundsinn von dem was wir historisch nennen. Zurück von da, und mit Ausscheidung des Spezifisch-Historischen, zum „biologischen“ Leben. Nicht umgekehrt!“ (86).

^v The student transcript I will be following here is preserved among the Helene Weiss Papers, M0631, Box 3, Folder 1, Special Collections, University of Stanford Libraries. Another transcript of the seminar by Oskar Becker, much less complete, had been published in Alfred Denker, Günter Figal, Franco Volpi, Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Heidegger und Aristoteles. Heidegger-Jahrbuch 3* (Freiburg, München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2007), 9-22. I have published both transcripts in parallel on facing pages, along with English translation, in *Kronos: Philosophical Journal X* (2021): 34-118. Citations are according to the pages of the Weiss transcript.

^{vi} It is a striking if accidental echo when Gadamer many years later begins an essay on the soul and life with the following words: “It remains important for everyone who pursues psychology to concern themselves with philosophy, and above all with its earliest beginnings in the thought of the Greeks” (*The Enigma of Health*, 141).

^{vii} *Übungen über Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Nikomachische Ethik VI; de anima; Metaphysik VII, WS 1922-23, November 2 (?) to February 19, Helene Weiss Papers, M0631, Box 3, Folder 6, Special Collections, University of Stanford Libraries; and Continuation of Seminar from WS1922-23, SS 1923, May 4 to July 5 (Box 3, Folder 6). A transcript by Oskar Becker covering both courses, though again much less complete and full of huge lacunae, was also published in Denker 2007, 23-48. For the detailed reconstruction and discussion of all of these seminars, see my forthcoming book, *Human Life in Motion: Martin Heidegger's Unpublished Seminars on Aristotle as Preserved by Helene Weiss* (Indiana University Press).*

^{viii} It is revealing that, to my knowledge, none of the extensive discussion of the *Natorp Bericht* has picked up on this reference to *De Anima* and to the *De motu animalium*. To give just one significant example, Scott M. Cambell's extensive discussion in chapter 5 of his *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being and Language* (Fordham University Press, 2012) completely overlooks this reference, not surprisingly since the book overall contains no reference to Heidegger's reading of *De Anima*. David Storey is an exception in noting the importance of the passage, observing: “Here, it appears that Heidegger is claiming that an ontology of life is more fundamental than what he will later call ‘fundamental ontology’, i.e., the ontology of human existence” (“Heidegger and the Question Concerning Biology: Life, Soul and Nature in the Early Aristotle Lecture Courses,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18.1 [2013]: 161-186; 165). But Storey provides no account of the *Natorp Bericht* that would explain the place of this passage within it. Interestingly, Gadamer reports Heidegger as writing to him in 1922 that the second part “is concerned with the *Metaphysica ZHΘ, De Motu An, De Anima*” (*Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley with an introduction by Dennis J. Schmidt [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994], 140).

^{ix} We do find a brief summary of *De Anima* in the SS1926 course *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, but this in the context of a survey of Aristotle's thought within the context of a survey of Ancient Greek Philosophy up to Aristotle (GA22, 182-8). Significantly, this survey ends with a section entitled “Ontologie des Daseins” in which, as we learn from the notes of Mörchen, Heidegger turned to the *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 6 (311-13). The focus as usual is on the question: “Wie ist spezifische Seinsart des Menschen?” (311) Mörchen also notes the important following claim about human life: “Ein solches Leben ist nicht bloß ζῶν, sondern βίος, ‘Existenz’” (312). We have already here the opposition of human existence to “mere life” that we find in *Sein und Zeit* and that reaches its culmination in the 1929/30 course.

^x As Storey comments, “one of the reasons *Being and Time* is incomplete is because it does not address the ontological problem of life discussed in the pre-*Being and Time* writings” (171).

^{xi} Strikingly, we find Heidegger making the same point, in almost identical language, in the 1922/23 seminar on *De Anima* on December 14: “Ontologie des Lebens. Der Begriff des ‚Lebens‘ ist nicht abzuschaffen, sonst verbaut man sich die Wege, sich die Motive des Fragens anzueignen. Leben-Vita-ζῶν geschichtl. schwer beladen. Man muß zum Ursprung zu kommen versuchen. Wir wollen nun die Möglichkeit schaffen den Gegenstand Leben ontolog. zu sehen. Bestimmte [Ausbildung] des Begriffes ζῶν von [Griechen] zu Hellenistik, N.T. und Patristik. Leben = Seinscharakter des menschlichen Daseins” (Weiss 31). Here too we see already a focusing on human existence.

^{xii} An important question arises here that cannot be dealt with in the context of the present paper: to what extent is the exclusion of the phenomenon of non-human life, and indeed of *nature*, required by Heidegger's thesis,

articulated emphatically in the Bericht (GA62, 373) and apparently *new there*, that Aristotle interpreted being from the perspective of ποιήσις and thus as *Hergestelltsein*?

^{xiii} As Polansky notes, this succession prevents the soul from being a genus, but also gives it sufficient unity to allow for a common account (194-199). As Eli Diamond also notes, “The serial logic described here by Aristotle thus opens a middle way between the pure synonymy of the most common definition and the pure homonymy of unconnected definitions of particular souls” (63).

^{xiv} Significantly Heidegger in the 1929/30 courses criticizes a similar position he finds in Max Scheler and identifies with the “biological worldview”: “Max Scheler recently attempted to treat this hierarchical sequence of material beings, life, and spirit in a unified manner within the context of an anthropology. He did so in the conviction that man is the being who unites within himself all the levels of beings—physical being, the being of plants and animals, and the being specific to spirit. I believe this thesis to be a fundamental error in Scheler’s position, one that must inevitably deny him any access to metaphysics” (192). Heidegger does not explain here what he takes the error to be, but it is clearly the error of not recognizing the metaphysical gap between man and animals. After all, Heidegger later will claim that animals cannot be said to ‘perceive’ because ‘perception’ is unique to human beings: “Yet in a fundamental sense the animal does not have perception” (259). This is presumably the “fundamental sense” missed by the unmetaphysical Scheler.

^{xv} Christopher Shields rightly dismisses the view that the rational soul is “a set of capacities stacked one upon the other in the manner of a layer cake” (*Aristotle: De Anima* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016], 197). Referring to Aristotle’s claim that lower-soul capacities are present in the higher souls only potentially (414b28-32), he suggests that “souls of any number of capacities are unities, with any lower-order souls discernible in higher-order souls only potentially in the sense that a removal of a higher capacity will generate a lower-order soul which is itself an actuality and a complete psychic unity” (197). He also notes that “higher-order faculties bleed into lower-order faculties, with the result that lower-order faculties will be altered by their subordination to the higher” (198). See also Eli Diamond who shows how, if the nutritive faculty is present in both plants and animals, it is significantly different in both cases: most importantly, the plant’s nutriment is ‘digested’ by the surrounding earth before entering the plant, while the animal’s nutriment must be digested internally, so that in this latter case only the nutritive faculty requires a stomach (123).

^{xvi} And there is also an important difference, as Eli Diamond notes, between what he calls ‘the serial logic of the categories’ and ‘the serial logic of the hierarchy of souls’: “while none of the non-substantial categories of being can exist without their focal meaning substance, which alone has independent and intrinsic (καθ’αυτό) existence, all the kinds of living can exist separately” (261n15).

^{xvii} The strongest and most detailed argument for this reading is to be found in Eli Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle’s De Anima* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015). Diamond writes: “Life and soul constitute an example of what Aristotle calls a πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα (*pros hen legomena*) structure (often rendered in English as “core-dependent homonymy”), a structure in which various things are said to be living in relation to one thing which is the most complete and explicit meaning of life. . . . This focal or core meaning of life is not the most common and primitive biological conception of life, the self-nourishment and self-maintenance characteristic of plants, but rather the highest and most complete sense of soul, its intellectual activity, which emerges in the human, but belongs most properly to the eternal self-contemplation of God. The core meaning of life is divine contemplation . . .” (4-5; see also 40).

^{xviii} It is therefore equally senseless to suggest that we could examine Dasein as “pure life”: “Auch das Dasein läßt sich als pures Leben betrachten. Für die biologisch-physiologische Fragestellung, rückt es dann in den Seinsbezirk, den wir als Tier- und Pflanzenwelt kennen” (246). And which counts here as „pure life“: plants or animals? If the former, then not the latter. Aristotle again would say that the notion of “pure life” is ridiculous: life is spoken of in different ways. Referring to Heidegger’s talk of “Nur-lebenden”, Derrida rightly speaks of “cette fiction, ce simulacre, ce mythe, cette légende, ce phantasme, qui se donne pour un pur concept (la vie à l’état pur . . .)” (*L’animal que donc je suis* [Paris : Galilée, 2006], 42) Derrida also claims, rightly and, I would add, in agreement with Aristotle, that there is no such thing as “the animal”; indeed, Derrida speaks of ‘animot’ to make clear that we are speaking only of a word here. “il n’y a pas l’Animal au singulier général, séparé de l’homme par une seule limite indivisible. Il faut envisager qu’il y a des ‘vivants’ dont la pluralité ne se laisse pas rassembler dans la seule figure de l’animalité simplement opposée à l’humanité. Il ne s’agit évidemment pas d’ignorer ou d’effacer tout ce qui sépare les hommes des autres animaux et de reconstituer un seul grand ensemble, un seul grand arbre généalogique foncièrement homogène et continu de l’animot à l’Homo (*faber, sapiens, ou je ne sais quoi encore*) » (73)

^{xix} “Denn auch Biologie kann als positive Wissenschaft diese Struktur [Haben einer Umwelt] nie finden und bestimmen—sie muß sie voraussetzen und ständig von ihr Gebrauch machen. Die Struktur selbst kann aber auch als Apriori des thematischen Gegenstandes der Biologie philosophisch nur expliziert werden, wenn sie zuvor als Daseinsstruktur begriffen ist“ (SZ 58). Significantly, Heidegger’s account in the 1929/30 course must “seek assistance from *the fundamental theses of zoology* concerning animality and life in general” (212, 310), even though he clearly does not think that any positive results of zoology could invalidate his metaphysical thesis about the essence of the animal. Thus, when he considers the possibility of someone objecting against his characterization of the animal as deprived of world that biology knows nothing of such a phenomenon, he replies: “The fact that biology recognizes nothing of the sort is no counter-argument against metaphysics” (272; 395-6).

^{xx} *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Harvard University Press, 2013), 120-121.

^{xxi} Derrida expresses the following ‘malaise’ in response to Heidegger’s argument in the 1929/30 course that the animal is ‘poor’ in world: does not speaking of ‘the animal’, rather than showing an independence from all positive knowledge, presuppose a “poor, primitive, dated, lacunary” positive knowledge that would reduce knowledge of one species to knowledge of the other? And here Derrida reminds us again that Heidegger’s ‘poverty in world’ admits of no degrees (*The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey Bennington [University of Chicago Press, 2011], 197). Indeed, one of the bizarre aspects of Heidegger’s account is the assumption that from the behaviour of a bee we can infer a universal essential claim that would also apply to primates. Indeed, Heidegger tells us that his choice of the bee as an example is meant to avoid “those forms of comportment displayed by the higher animals that seem to correspond so closely to our own comportment” (240-241; GA29/30, 350). Heidegger does not hide the fact that he is making “a *statement of essence*” about “*all animals, every animal*” (186; GA29/30, 275). At one point he even claims to be taking a look at “animality itself” (195; GA29/30, 288: “die Tierheit selbst”). In responding to Derrida’s critique by insisting that Heidegger’s choice as example of a simple organism like a bee is irrelevant because his account is ontological and not ontic (2022, 60-61), Sforza is simply restating the problem: what is the justification for assuming that bees and gorillas are ontologically the same but gorillas and humans are not?

^{xxii} A good example is the analogy at 659b20-25 between a bird’s beak and a man’s teeth and lips.

^{xxiii} Aristotle does claim at one point that those animals have the greatest diversity of parts “to whose share has fallen not mere life but life of high degree” (εἶ ζῆν, 656a6) and that such an animal is man since he “alone partakes of the divine [μετέχει τοῦ θείου], or at any rate partakes of it in a fuller measure than the rest” (656a7-8). But given the claim in *De Anima* according to which animals partake in the divine through reproduction [415b3-6], the latter alternative must be the right one.

^{xxiv} “Die Interpretation dieser Abhandlung macht unter vorläufigem Absehen von der spezifisch ethischen Problematik die ‚dianoetischen Tugenden‘ verständlich als die Weisen des Verfügens über die Vollzugsmöglichkeit echter *Seinsverwahrung*“ (GA62, 376).

^{xxv} Heidegger does later in the SS1924 course *Die Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* refer to the *Parts of Animals*, the title of which he interprets as “Über den Fügungs- und Leistungszusammenhang des Lebenden als eines bestimmten Seienden“ (GA18 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002], 208-9). However, his focus there is on what it has to say about the education and methodology required by all theoretical investigation and not on the specifically biological content.

^{xxvi} There is also evidence that Heidegger considered teaching a seminar on Aristotle in the autumn of 1921 that would have addressed the biological writings. In a letter to Karl Löwith of October 3, 1921, he writes: “Wenn ich ein kleines Seminar mache, dann wohl Aristoteles, wenn Sie sich an seine biologischen Forschungen machen könnten [If I teach a small seminar, then Aristotle, if you can get down to work on his biological investigations]“ (*Martin Heidegger / Karl Löwith Briefwechsel*, ed. Alfred Denker [Freiburg im Breisgau: Karl Alber, 2017], 57).

^{xxvii} Significantly, the ‘Beilagen’ found with Heidegger’s copy of the Natorp Bericht contain references to *De motu animalium* (see GA62, 406-7).

^{xxviii} If Heidegger can at one point observe that “life is a domain which possesses a wealth of openness with which the human world may have nothing to compare” (255; GA29/30, 371-2), it is all the more striking that his account can only turn this wealth into poverty.

^{xxix} Storey surprisingly defends the position that “Heidegger’s comparative investigation in 1929 was on the right track—in part because it entertained a continuum view of humanity’s place in nature—and that it actually involved a return to his pre-*Being and Time* investigations into Aristotle’s writings on life and animals” (164). Storey himself shows later in the article that the appearance of continuity suggested by the comparative ‘poor in world’ is in fact

an illusion hiding an abyss and that the 1929-30 course represents a major departure from the pre-*Being and Time* ontology of life inspired by Aristotle.

^{xxx} The same is found in the distinction between *dying*, which is what only Dasein does, and something else that “only-living” things do: “. . . das Aus-der-Welt-gehen des *Daseins im Sinne des Sterbens* unterschieden werden muß von einem Aus-der-Welt-gehen des Nur-lebenden. Das Enden eines Lebendigen fassen wir terminologisch als Verenden” (240; see also 247). Even Sforza’s detailed explanation and defense of this claim cannot find in Heidegger a full explanation of what this *Verenden* distinctive of living things is (2022, 237, 248); the insistence is instead on what it is *not*: dying. That the notion of ‘lack’ itself is problematic as a description of the animal’s relation to world has been shown by Derrida: “How could the animal still feel itself to be deprived if it does not have access to beings as such, or to the other, the entirely other as such? . . . Has it not been deprived of deprivation itself? And man, in all that—is he not also deprived of deprivation itself?” (*The Beast and the Sovereign*, 201)

^{xxxi} Heidegger himself concludes his analysis acknowledging that “the thesis that ‘*the animal is poor in world*’ must remain as a problem” (273). He recognizes the possible objection that “this characterization of animality by means of poverty in world is not a genuine one, not drawn from animality itself and maintained within the limits of animality, since the character of poverty in world is being conceived by comparison with man. It is only from the human perspective that the animal is poor with respect to world, yet animal being in itself is not a deprivation of world” (270-1). Heidegger does not answer this objection but immediately turns it into another that is not, contra Heidegger, the same objection “expressed more clearly and in a more far-reaching manner” (271) but, on the contrary, a narrower, more superficial trivialization of the same: the objection that if Heidegger’s thesis were right, the whole of the animal realm would be permeated by suffering and pain, something biology does not detect! To this silly version of the objection Heidegger can easily respond, as already noted above, that biology is incapable of proving anything against metaphysics (272). The substantive objection cited has nothing to do with pain and suffering but attacks the genuineness of a conception of animality carried out entirely from the perspective of man and therefore negatively. And note that this objection does not even acknowledge the problematic character of the notion of ‘animality’ itself. See Sforza 2022, 38-40, for the citation of passages from Heidegger’s later work in which he acknowledges the inadequacy of the term *Weltarmut*.

^{xxxii} Before this point in the course plants indeed are mentioned, but always as an unexplained addendum to the real focus. Thus after claiming that in our existence we comport ourselves toward animals, Heidegger adds: “and in a certain manner toward plants too” (210). The beings in question in the discussion are stone, animal, man “and indeed plants” (207).

^{xxxiii} In the 1925/26 course *Logik: die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, Heidegger is willing to grant that even plants have a world (GA21, 215).

^{xxxiv} See the parallel passage in *History of Animals* 588b4-18.

^{xxxv} Speaking of Heidegger’s ‘privative interpretation’, Renaud Barbaras writes: “Il faut souligner, d’autre part, qu’en procédant ainsi, Heidegger n’affronte finalement jamais la question du sens d’être de la vie. . . . La vie n’est jamais interrogée en propre mais référée successivement à l’étant subsistant de la nature, dont elle ne serait qu’une différenciation, et à l’existence du *Dasein*, c’est-à-dire finalement toujours à autre chose qu’elle-même » (50-51). This is not just an oversight on Heidegger’s part. As Barbaras proceeds to note, accounting for the distinctive being of life would threaten the very opposition governing the analysis of *Being and Time* between existence and substantial presence: “Ainsi, il ne fait pas doute que c’est la partition même de l’étant instituée au début de *Sein und Zeit* que se trouverait gravement menacé par la prise en considération de la vie” (64).

^{xxxvi} “The proper being of the animal means that the animal, and in the first place its specific capability for . . . is proper to itself. It does not lose itself in the sense that an instinctual impulse [triebhafter Drang] to something would leave itself behind. Rather it retains itself precisely in such a drive and remains ‘its self’, as we might say, in this drive [Triebe] and driving [Treiben]” (233-4; 340).

^{xxxvii} “It is not thus possibility [Möglichkeit; i.e., possibility as contrasted to actuality], but rather *being-capable* [*Fähigsein*] which belongs to the animal’s *being actual* [*Wirklichsein*], to the *essence of life* [zum *Wesen des Lebens*]” (235; 343).

^{xxxviii} For how this account of life Heidegger found in *De Anima* in 1921 prefigures his own account of the being of Dasein seven years later in *Sein und Zeit*, see my “The Birth of ‘Being and Time’: Heidegger’s Pivotal 1921 Reading of Aristotle’s ‘On the Soul.’” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 56.2 (2018): 1-24. Consider Heidegger’s claim about Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* that because it *is* what it *becomes* and does not become, it can say to itself, “become what

you are!” (145). In 1921 it is seen as a characteristic of all life that it is what it becomes and becomes what it is: it is a peculiar sort of motion according to which what is in motion preserves rather than alters itself.

^{xxxix} In commenting on the same concept of σωτηρία used to describe the nutritive capability of plants (416b17-20), R. Polansky comments: “Saving (σώζειν) is a most astounding function. . . . In ii 5, especially 417b2-5, it will become clear that all operations of soul faculties will be ways of saving the faculty, since they bring the potentiality into fullest actuality, and therefore they are hardly standard sorts of motions. The task of life, nutritive, sensitive, intellective seems to be to save or preserve the kind of life. We may say that saving itself, rather than self-motion, is the best way to characterize life itself. All life as operation of soul is activity in contrast with motion, activity that is always complete and continuable. This activity is not change but saving of the sort of being, of its very life and of the principle of such life. As alive plants save themselves, as do animals and even God” (*Aristotle’s De Anima* [Cambridge University Press, 2007], 218).

^{xl} The same point is repeated in the 1922/23 seminar: „Urphänomen: Pflanze wächst nach allen Seiten. Das ist das Erste, was sich phänomenal gibt. Hier die primitive Direktion gegeben f. das, was sich in der Ontologie abhebt. Für uns heute schwer, diese Primitivität zu sehen“ (Weiss, 22). Heidegger presumably has in mind the following passage from *De Anima*: “Therefore also all plants (τὰ φύόμενα πάντα) appear to live. For they appear to possess in themselves the kind of power and principle through which they assume growth and decay in opposite directions (κατὰ τοὺς ἐναντίους τόπους). For it is not the case that they grow upwards and not downwards, but similarly in both directions and all (καὶ πάντη) . . .” (413a25-29).

^{xli} Jonas speaks here of “felt selfhood, however faint its voice” (84) and adds that “in some (even if infinitesimal) degree of ‘awareness’ it harbors the supreme concern of organism with its own being and continuation in being—that is, it is self-centered . . .” (84).

^{xlii} “Dilthey and Ortega: The Philosophy of Life (1985),” in *Hermeneutics between History and Philosophy: The Selected Writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, vol. 1, eds. and trans. Pol Vandavelde and Arun Iyer (Bloomsbury, 2016), 98. See also “Life and Soul,” in *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford University Press, 1996), 149: “We cannot fail to recognize, then, that it is characteristic of living things always to possess this power over themselves.” See also pp. 144-145 on the problem of self-motion as distinctive of all life.

^{xliii} Relevant here are Gadamer’s reflections on the *structural similarity* between life and consciousness: “Leben bestimmt sich dadurch, daß das Lebendige sich von der Welt, in der es lebt und mit der es verbunden bleibt, selber unterscheidet und in solcher Selbstunterscheidung erhält. Die Selbsterhaltung des Lebendigen geschieht ja in der Weise, daß es außer ihm Seiendes in sich selbst einbezieht. Alles Lebendige nährt sich aus dem ihm Fremden. Die fundamentale Tatbestand des Lebendigseins ist die Assimilation. Die Unterscheidung ist also zugleich eine Nichtunterscheidung. Das Fremde wird angeeignet“ (*Wahrheit und Methode, Gesammelte Werke, Hermeneutik I*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 257).

^{xliiv} But the broader identification of being-in-the-world with the being of living things as a whole persists in the background of Heidegger’s ontology for some time. Thus in the SS1924 course *Die Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* we read: “Ζωή ist ein Seinsbegriff, Leben besagt eine Weise des Seins, und zwar Sein-in-einer-Welt. Ein Lebendes ist nicht einfach vorhanden, sondern ist in einer Welt, in der Weise, daß es seine Welt hat. Ein Tier ist nicht einfach auf die Straße gestellt und bewegt sich auf der Straße, indem es von irgendeinem Apparat geschoben wird. Es ist in der Welt in der Weise des Sie-Habens“ (GA18, 18). Storey even suggests, without knowledge of the unpublished seminars on *De Anima*, that in the SS1924 Heidegger concedes more to animal being than perhaps anywhere else (168-9).

^{xliv} Sforza notes that Heidegger after *Being and Time* never abandoned this ‘privative’ approach: “Aus der durchgeführten Analyse lässt sich folgen, dass die Privationsvorschrift ein Grundgedanke Heideggers ist, den er auch nach *Sein und Zeit* keineswegs verabschiedet hat“ (2022, 99).

^{xlvi} It is worth drawing attention here to an important and revealing footnote in the book by Hans Jonas. Jonas is commenting on Heidegger’s critique of the definition of man as “rational animal” in the *Letter on Humanism*. Heidegger claims that the addition of ‘rational’ does not change the fact that this definition shoves humans into “the essential realm of animality” and thereby esteems the essence of human beings too little (“dadurch wird das Wesen des Menschen zu gering geachtet und nicht seiner Herkunft gedacht, welche Wesensherkunft für das geschichtliche Menschentum stets die Wesensherkunft bleibt. Die Metaphysik denkt den Menschen von der animalitas her und denkt nicht zu seiner humanitas hin“ (*Wegmarken*, 155/321). Jonas notes: „‘Animal in the

Greek sense means not ‚beast‘ or ‚brute‘ but any ‚animated being‘, including demons, gods, the ensouled stars—even the ensouled universe as a whole (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 30c): no ‚lowering‘ of man is implied in placing him within this scale, and the bogey of ‚animality‘ in its modern connotations is slipped in surreptitiously. In reality, the lowering to Heidegger consists in placing ‚man‘ in *any* scale, that is, in the context of *nature* as such. The Christian devaluation of ‚animal‘ to ‚beast‘, which indeed makes the term usable only in contrast to ‚man‘, merely reflects the larger break with the classical position—the break by which Man, as the unique possessor of an immortal soul, comes to stand outside ‚nature‘ entirely. The existentialist argument takes off from this new basis: the play on the semantic ambiguity of ‚animal‘, while scoring an easy point, conceals this shift of basis of which that ambiguity is a function, and fails to meet the classical position with which it ostensibly argues” (227-8n14). An important insight here is that Heidegger’s ‚existentialist‘ philosophy simply continues the devaluation of ‚animal‘ that one finds in Christianity. Ironically, it is not clear that Jonas himself avoids this, especially in the chapter of his book entitled „Image-making and the Freedom of Man” that seeks to determine “man’s ‚specific difference‘ in the animal kingdom” (157) and concludes, like Heidegger, that there exists “a metaphysical gap” between “animal world-relation” and “the crudest attempt at representation” in humans (175). Barbaras also claims that Heidegger falls back into the metaphysical humanism he claims to reject in interpreting animal life only from the perspective of Dasein and, through the talk of privation, making the latter the *telos* (60-61). But he also sees the fundamental error that leads Heidegger on this path: thinking that the metaphysical determination of man is to be overcome by refusing any definition of humanity from the perspective of life, rather than by challenging the metaphysical determination of life (51). This is clearly a case of throwing out the baby with the bathwater!

^{xlvii} Not knowing Heidegger’s early seminars on *De Anima* and trying to find an ontology of life in other courses from this period, R. Rubio must conclude that “even when the young Heidegger considered organic life in general, his proposal was emphatically oriented toward an ontological elaboration of practical life Even as he recognizes the structure of Being-there (*Dabeisein*) in the affective orientation of the living being, his reflection is finally oriented toward the prominent structure of human *Dasein*” (“Heidegger’s Ontology of Life before *Being and Time*: Scope and Limits,” *The New Centennial Review* 10.3 [2010]: 65-78; 76).

^{xlviii} “La confusion de tous les vivants non humains sous la catégorie commune et générale de l’animal n’est pas seulement une faute contre l’exigence de pensée, la vigilance, ou la lucidité, l’autorité de l’expérience, c’est aussi un crime : non pas contre l’animalité, justement, mais un premier crime contre les animaux, contre *des* animaux » (73)

^{xlix} For a good examination of this issue with a focus on the body’s absence in the existential analysis of *Sein und Zeit*, see Cristian Ciocan, “The Question of the Living Body in Heidegger’s Analytic of Dasein,” *Research in Phenomenology* 38 (2008): 72-89. As Ciocan observes, “To the extent that the body is grounded in the dimension of life, the exclusion of life constitutes the condition of possibility for marginalizing the living body of Dasein” (74). See also Gadamer’s observation: “. . . the philosophical tradition to which I too belong, both as a student of the Marburg school and as a phenomenologist and student of Husserl and Heidegger, has done little to illuminate the theme of the body and embodiment and its particular obscurity. It is no accident that Heidegger himself was forced to admit that he had not reflected on the theme of the body or concentrated his intellectual powers on it to the same extent as he had on so many other essential themes of human existence” (*The Enigma of Health*, 70). And he significantly follows this observation by contrasting Aristotle: “Perhaps, even for us today, Aristotle was right when he said that the soul is nothing more than the living character of the body, the form of fulfilled self-realization which he called *entelecheia*” (71).