Summoning the courage for philosophising: A new reading of Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*

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Submitted for the qualification of DPhil in Philosophy, Trinity Term 2015

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Abstract

This thesis provides an original reading of Heidegger's 1929-30 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. Currently, the notoriety of *FCM* stems from controversy surrounding its description of human beings as 'world-forming,' and of animals as comparatively 'poor in world.' These propositions are interpreted within the secondary literature as a reinforcement of ontotheological and humanistic metaphysics. However, this standard interpretation misses the more complex and subtle significance of this material in the broader context of the lectures. I argue that Heidegger's 'comparative examination' forms part of a wider metaphysical project of interrogating a contemporary 'delusion,' a metaphysical division drawn between 'life' and 'spirit' engendered by an 'anthropological' worldview which pictures man as a composite of those two elements. Heidegger traces the manifestations of this delusion in *Kulturphilosophie* and biology, before attempting to recover a more genuinely metaphysical attitude, one founded not on anthropocentric 'worldviews' but on a direct, courageous 'confrontation' with ourselves. Heidegger argues that this confrontation must take its orientation from Greek thought, in which man is interpreted as that part of *physis* that apprehends *physis* as a whole. For Heidegger, this notion of the human as a kind of 'meta-physical' being enables us to grasp the coextensive essence of the human and of metaphysics. I argue that Heidegger's position can be extended and enriched if we consider it in conjunction with what he presents in the lecture course as one of its great adversaries; for the German tradition of philosophical anthropology, rather than being a straightforward articulation of the life-spirit divide that Heidegger wishes to eschew, actually harmonises with and deepens Heidegger's reflections in *FCM* concerning the nature of the human as a meta-physical being.

Thesis word count including citations: 71,800

For my parents, Peter and Christine,

with love and gratitude.

"In the final analysis courage is nothing but an affirmative answer to the shocks of existence, to the shocks which it is necessary to bear for the sake of realising one's own nature." *Kurt Goldstein*[1]

"Philosophy is the opposite of all comfort and assurance. It is turbulence, the turbulence into which man is spun, so as in this way alone to comprehend Dasein without delusion." *Martin Heidegger*[2]

[1] Goldstein, K. (1951) *Human Nature in the Light of Psychopathology* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press p.113

[2] Heidegger, M. (1995) *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* trans. McNeill, W. and Walker, N. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press §6 b) β) p.19

Contents

Introduction

In his 1929-30 lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*,[1] Heidegger poses a challenge that, he hopes, will incite his listeners and readers to begin philosophising. The text reads like an invitation to philosophise in the contemporary age, an invitation that must only be accepted in full knowledge of the 'perils' of the activity.[2] If we read the first few pages of Heidegger's lecture course, we find ourselves drawn into a passionate rhetoric in which philosophy is presented not as 'some blissful awe,' but as a violent, turbulent, and ambiguous activity in which the human being comes to realise itself and its place within nature.[3] Philosophy is envisaged in these passages as an activity that strikes at the heart of what it means to be human, because, as Heidegger will argue throughout *FCM*, philosophy, understood in its essence as 'metaphysics' – i.e. as a 'going beyond' and 'turning toward' *physis – is* what it means to be human. It is the 'supreme,' 'ultimate,' constitutively human activity.[4] To this extent, Heidegger argues that our peculiarly human propensity for philosophising says far more about who and what we are than our upright gait, our opposable thumb, or our advanced neocortex. Philosophy, according to Heidegger's account in *FCM*, eludes and precedes all conceptions of the human that are based on comparative anatomy, psychology, anthropology or biology. This is because philosophy, Heidegger tells us, is the direct outcome of the interruption in nature in which human existence emerges. It is the exercise in which the human strikes out beyond nature only to 'turn towards' it and articulate its discoveries.[5] The capacity to

[1] Hereafter *FCM*
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., §7 p.21; §6 b) β) p.19
[4] Ibid., §6b) α) p.16
[5] Ibid., §11b) p.39

'speak out' of nature via the *logos* reaches its apex in the activity of philosophy, but reaching this point of extremity, according to Heidegger, requires an extraordinary act of 'courage' (*Mut*).[6] It demands that we no longer flee from the burden of our finite and indeterminate nature, and that we expose ourselves to what Ortega terms the 'shuddering risk' of existence.[7]

This rhetorical register at the opening of *FCM* contains distinct echoes of German Romanticism. What Heidegger describes as the fertile and chaotic 'terror' (*Schrecken*) of philosophy stems from the realisation that we cannot examine the human using the keen, rationalistic eyes of a scientist in order to discern what kind of being it is.[8] Nor can we construct grand narratives concerning the human 'condition' based on subjective 'worldviews' of our own making.[9] Both science and worldview treat the human as if it is an item in a taxonomy, a being 'out there' that we can observe, track and measure, all the while retaining a professional detachment. However, Heidegger argues that in reality our starting point is neither as simple nor as privileged as this. As the being that engages in philosophy, that is, as the being that 'speaks out' about beings whilst being one amongst them, we are always already faced with the fact that we are part of that which we seek to explain; we *are* that which we seek to explain. This brings with it a profound ambiguity, but, Heidegger says, from within the confines of our own viewpoint, 'we simply cannot demand anything else.'[10] This realisation is the first major step in accepting Heidegger's 'invitation to philosophise.' It involves submitting to the disorientating, 'dizzying' knowledge that, since it is the human who

[6] Ibid., §38b) p.167
[7] Ortega, J. cited in Weiss, D. (2002) (eds.) *Interpreting Man* Aurora, CO: The Davies Group Publishers p.168
[8] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §2a) p.4; §1a) p.1
[9] Ibid., §1a) p.2
[10] Ibid., §1b) β) p.19

philosophises, the questions of what philosophy is and how we should begin philosophising are bound up with the question of what it means to be human. As a being that philosophises, the human is not simply a member of the *Hominidae* family and cannot be fully explained by recourse to its kinship with other primates. The task of discovering that which is 'essential' about the human, the fundamental quality that characterises it as a philosophical being, cannot be an anthropological task because, as Beistegui says, the essence of the human, according to Heidegger, 'is itself nothing human,' i.e. nothing 'hominid-like.'[11] When we question what human beings are, we are already pursuing something 'in excess' of the idea of man as a type of primate.[12] For in the very activity of posing this question, we have already detached ourselves from the domain of the purely 'natural;' we have opened ourselves up to the question of existence as such.

Heidegger's major claim in *FCM* is that in order to prepare ourselves for philosophising, we need to adopt what looks like an antithetical blend of weakness and strength. We need to allow ourselves to become weakened by the knowledge that, even in the contemporary age, the human is not something that has been understood, and that the scientific and cultural-psychological interpretations of the human that we have at our disposal are premature and non-essential.[13] At the same time we need to summon the courage to shoulder and sustain this 'burdensome' knowledge in order to move through it into an engagement with 'genuine' philosophising.[14] In line with Romantic scepticism concerning concepts of the human being as a citadel of certainty – a rational

[11] Beistegui, M. (2003) *Thinking with Heidegger* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press p.13
[12] Ibid; Heidegger, M. *FCM* §43 p.179
[13] The term 'contemporary' is being used here to refer to the time of *FCM*, i.e., the early twentieth century, rather than our own time. Unless otherwise stated, I will use the term in this manner throughout the thesis.
[14] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §38 p.166

being that occupies a secure position in the cosmos – Heidegger wishes to open up what Seyhan terms the 'critical anxiety' that motivated the German Romanticist project.[15] Heidegger follows Novalis in envisaging philosophy as a form of 'homesickness,' an expression of the human's lack of any immutable place in nature.[16]

In order to set this rediscovery of philosophy as the deepest illustration of what it means to be human in motion, Heidegger claims that we need to take many steps back; indeed, we must go right back to the Greek origins of philosophy and rethink what philosophy and the human are in essence. We can then rediscover a propensity for philosophising in our own age, an age that is rich in information concerning the human, but destitute of philosophical curiosity in Heidegger's view. Heidegger claims that the contemporary epoch is one in which fundamental but unthinking ontological distinctions are drawn between different classes of being, and knowledge is stratified and organised. The most extreme and dogmatic example of this distinction-making, stratification and organisation is the division that is drawn in both *Kulturphilosophie*, and more implicitly in ontic science, between 'life' and 'spirit.' In this distinction life is interpreted as the chaotic 'simmering of drives' that is shared by all 'natural' beings, and 'spirit' is defined as the domain of human reason.[17] In *FCM* Heidegger wishes to draw our attention to the pervasiveness of this division and the metaphysical delusions that it propagates in order to begin to rehabilitate philosophy in the contemporary age. Heidegger argues that ultimately, this task also involves rehabilitating us as philosophical beings, reawakening the mystery of existence, of philosophising, and of ourselves, and attempting to endure the philosophically potent terror that this

[15] Seyhan, A. "What is Romanticism and where did it come from?" in Saul, N. (eds) (2009) *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.9
[16] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §2b) p.5
[17] Ibid., §18a) p.70

reawakening will inspire. This undertaking requires an especially courageous effort in the contemporary age of science and worldview, in which we tend to create and subscribe to 'exciting,' fundamentally 'anthropological' definitions of what it means to be human that, according to Heidegger, remove our need for courage in the face of the extremity of existence, and therefore make the task of philosophy appear redundant, alien and obscure.[18]

The above description of *FCM* forms the basis of the new reading of the lecture course that I will present in this thesis. It is one that is entirely at odds with the common understanding of the lecture course that is currently found in secondary literature, and is therefore likely to seem unfamiliar and strange. The principal association that *FCM* has amongst Heidegger scholars concerns a move that Heidegger makes in the second half of the lecture course. *Prima facie*, this move seems shocking; it is one that, when we flick through the contents of the seventy-six sections of *FCM*, immediately draws our eye. At a relatively late stage in the lecture course, Heidegger posits three theses concerning the 'world-relations' of different classes of being: the stone, the animal, and man. The stone, Heidegger claims, is without a world; it is 'worldless' (*weltlos*). The animal has 'poverty in world' (*Weltarmut*), and man is 'world-forming' (*weltbildend*).[19] This looks like a classical valorisation of life, an ordering of beings that, like other ontotheological hierarchies, places the human at the top. This all looks distinctly un-Heideggerian, and it is unclear how it could form part of the 'invitation to philosophise' that, I have argued, is the core aim of *FCM*. Not surprisingly, this part of the lecture course enrages Heidegger scholars, prompting David Farrell Krell to describe *FCM* as

[18] Ibid., §18c) p.75
[19] Ibid., §42 p.176

Heidegger's most 'reactionary' and 'uninspired' work, and as a 'colossal failure.'[20] After warning us, in *Being and Time*, about the conceptual limitations enforced by the drawing up of neat Cartesian lines around different aspects of human existence – those of life, spirit, and mind – Heidegger appears to be sectioning the human off from life entirely in this 'comparative examination' of world-relations.[21] For good reason, Krell as well as a range of other commentators, take serious issue with this section of the lecture course. However, they do so at the expense of attending to the rest of *FCM*. The general impression given by this extreme concentration on one aspect of the lectures, which takes up only four of its seventy-six sections, is that *FCM* is about securing man's superiority over the animal domain.

I will argue in this thesis that this is a false impression that arises as a result of a lack of exegetical clarity in the 'Krellian' reading. The focus, in the latter reading, on just one part of Heidegger's lecture course means that the other parts receive barely any exegetical attention. This results in a profound misunderstanding, and, ultimately, in *FCM* being simplified and under-celebrated. I will aim to address this misunderstanding by conducting a close exegesis of the neglected passages of *FCM*. I will place the few pages in which Heidegger conducts his comparative examination into the context of the lecture course as a whole, which includes a lengthy engagement with the Greek understanding of philosophy and the human's relationship to it, an examination of the concept of 'fundamental attunement' (*Grundstimmung*) as a pathway into philosophy, and an account of world, finitude and solitude as 'fundamental concepts' of metaphysics and of man. This new way of reading the lecture course will reveal that the

[20] Krell, D.F. (1992) *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press p.315; p.128

[21] Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time* trans. by Macquarrie, J. and Robinson, E. Oxford: Blackwell §10 p.71

prevalent theme of *FCM* is not man versus animal but metaphysics itself, philosophy as *the* constitutively human activity, and, correspondingly, of the human as *the* meta-physical being. Only by initially bracketing the famous, incendiary sections on the animal will it be possible to restore the extraordinary richness, depth and drama of the text.

Prior to retrieving the metaphysical context that prefaces all of the various moves that Heidegger makes in the lecture course, including his comparative examination, I will look in detail at the 'orthodox' manner in which *FCM* has been received thus far. In chapter one, I will present a '*prima facie*' reading of the sections that contain the comparative examination – Heidegger's so called 'animal lectures' – in order to trace the deep controversy that currently surrounds *FCM*, and make way for my own new, alternative reading. Chapter two will mark the start of my 'interpretation' chapters, where I will present an exegesis of the parts of the lecture course that Krell et al. leave out. The chapter will examine Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal* in which he plans the trajectory of the lecture course, delimits its scope and defines its task as an invitation to philosophise in the contemporary age, an invitation that requires an initial understanding of the original Greek meaning of philosophy as metaphysics. Chapters three and four will proceed chronologically through the lecture course and examine Heidegger's analysis in Part One of *FCM* of 'fundamental attunement' as the optic through which all metaphysics occurs, and his subsequent attempt to establish what the contemporary fundamental attunement might look like. Heidegger claims in these sections that the contemporary age is one in which we have become bored with man. The most salient symptom of this boredom is the distinction that is drawn in cultural psychology and in ontic science between life and spirit as two 'components' of man, a distinction that separates the human as a 'spiritual' being from the terrain of life and

removes all senses of the enigma of human existence.[22] The comparative examination, rather than being Heidegger's own way of ordering beings, is intended to express and ventriloquize this contemporary metaphysical conception of the human and its place in nature. The distinction, Heidegger says, results in a golden age of anthropology in which the nature of the human and its role in history are definitively 'diagnosed,' but in which human existence is never 'confronted' directly.[23] Heidegger insists that in order to navigate the delusions that are embedded in this situation, we need to attain a deep understanding of them. We need to think about these concepts – life and spirit — so that we can grasp the profound influence that they have on contemporary thinking, and to recognise that they are the superficial derivations of a more essential, more philosophical way of thinking. In chapter five, which will be the final chapter based principally on interpretation and exegesis, I will turn to Heidegger's examination of life by analysing his appraisal of early twentieth century biology. This examination will account for Heidegger's claims concerning animality and will therefore address the exegetical paucity and confusion that, I argue, suffuses the Krellian reading.

Chapter six will mark a departure from the 'interpretation' chapters of the thesis and will launch my own critical dialogue with *FCM*, focussing on Heidegger's use of the concept of 'spirit.' As one half of the crucially important life-spirit divide, one would assume that Heidegger would pay as much attention to spirit as he does to life, and in this vein, analyse anthropology as thoroughly as he does biology. However, Heidegger

[22]Heidegger elaborates the concept of spirit and its distinction from life through a range of contemporary thinkers including Nietzsche, Spengler and Scheler (*FCM* §18). Derrida registers the important role of the life-spirit opposition in Heidegger's lectures by examining its presence in the comparative examination (see *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* trans. Bennington, G. and Bowlby, R. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press Chapter Six). Derrida returns to this question in a later seminar, in which he situates Heidegger's comparative examination within the context of a discussion of political sovereignty (see *The Beast and the Sovereign Vol. II* (2011) trans. Bennington, G. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press).

[23] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18c) p.75

restricts his comments concerning anthropology to the few cursory remarks in Part One, in which he denounces the discipline as perhaps the most dangerous form of *Darstellung*, i.e. as a representation of the human that serves as a the progenitor of all philosophically impoverished 'worldviews.'[24] In these remarks Heidegger ignores the seminal and prolific body of work known as 'philosophical anthropology,' which was spearheaded by Max Scheler during the 1920s. Despite the fact that Heidegger critiques what he sees as deep, impenetrable delusions implicit in all anthropology, this German tradition of philosophical anthropology contains insights that resonate with Heidegger's own project in *FCM*. Chapter six will ultimately argue that, though there is a methodological and conceptual chasm between many aspects of their respective approaches, the outcome of Heidegger's analyses and those of the philosophical anthropologists converge in a profound way. Philosophical anthropology therefore deserves to be brought into any conversation about *FCM*, and its conspicuous absence in the lecture course is, I will argue, something of an omission on Heidegger's part.

Having put philosophical anthropology onto the metaphysical map that Heidegger draws up in *FCM*, chapter seven will then return to Heidegger's own perspective, and will reveal how he attempts to get us back on the track of our philosophical journey by retrieving a genuinely philosophical attitude. The chapter will argue that Heidegger's overarching aim, having examined the contemporary preoccupation with life and spirit, is to 'rehabilitate' philosophising in our age from within the ravages of contemporary man's boredom with himself, and from within the confusing conceptual straitjacket of the life-spirit distinction.

[24] Ibid., p.77

I will conclude that, though Heidegger's account of the 'co-belonging' between philosophy and human existence is far more interesting, ambitious and profound than the Krellian reading allows for, taking up Heidegger's 'invitation to philosophise' need not involve a wholesale dismissal of anthropology. I will develop my claim in chapter six that the German tradition of philosophical anthropology does not, as Heidegger claims, remove the sense of mystery or the need for courageous philosophising in the face of human existence. Rooted in Herder's early Romantic anthropology, philosophical anthropology approximates many of Heidegger's similarly Romantic claims in *FCM*, and does so as part of a biologically rich account of the distinct morphology of the human, one that empirically reinforces the idea that the human is unhinged from, and open to, nature. Rather than being a subversion of the activity of philosophy, philosophical anthropology is a contemporary example of the 'genuine' philosophising that Heidegger wishes to restore in *FCM*, and can further facilitate his aim of staging a renewed philosophical awareness in our contemporary age.

Chapter One: Heidegger's so-called "animal lectures" and their reception

An abyss of essence: Introducing the 'Krellian' reading

In this chapter I wish to engage with the infamous sections of *FCM* that are often referred to as Heidegger's 'animal lectures.' Before I present my own alternative reading of the lecture course, I will head straight to this material, which tends to deeply disturb commentators. Like these commentators, I will bracket the contents of the rest of the lecture course and simply clarify the contents of the ten or so pages in which Heidegger outlines his 'comparative examination' of the world-relations of the stone, animal, and man. This will be followed by a summary of the objections raised in the secondary literature. I will, in a sense, enter into the perspective of this secondary literature, which I will refer to as the 'Krellian' reading, in order to give these objections a fair hearing. It will become clear that the objections appear entirely reasonable when examined alongside the very brief passages that contain Heidegger's comparative examination. Where necessary I will provide 'background' on Heidegger's claims, but my principal aim is to do justice to the existent work on *FCM* before departing from the interpretations contained in this work entirely.

The second part of *FCM,* in which Heidegger strikes up a dialogue with biology and zoology, has received far more attention than the first on account of its apparently shocking irreconcilability with the rest of Heidegger's oeuvre. Heidegger exhibits a deep concern in this part of the lecture course with ontic science, a concern that McNeill describes as 'astonishing, because nowhere else will Heidegger take the experimental results of science so seriously in support of possible metaphysical

claims.'[1] Looking at these sections, it appears as if Heidegger wishes, uncharacteristically, to use science positively. But it is clear that his hypothesis that the animal is 'poor in world' whereas man is 'world-forming' is likely to be entirely at odds with contemporary biological research, which, coming in the wake of Darwin, disabuses the human of all claims to uniqueness. How will Heidegger derive any positive use for the life sciences in his analysis if he wishes simultaneously to deny one of the most significant outcomes of evolutionary biology, i.e. the notion that the human is descended from an ape? If the theses directly undermine biological taxonomies, it seems unlikely that Heidegger will be able to exploit biology for the purpose of furnishing his own metaphysical agenda.

The seemingly deliberately enigmatic, bombastic tone of Heidegger's comparative examination has repulsed even the most committed Heidegger scholars. The objection that unifies their interpretations is the idea that Heidegger allows his investigation to be framed by a fundamentally evaluative and humanistic conception of man's place in nature. Perhaps the most notable exemplar of this highly critical reading is to be found in the work of David Farrell Krell, who argues that, despite its extraordinary ambition, *FCM* amounts to a failed attempt at conventional ontotheological hierarchizing. Krell's assessment of Heidegger's lecture course is saturated with an air of tragic melancholy at the downfall of a philosophical luminary. '[N]owhere,' Krell says, 'is Heidegger's thought so uninspired and so reactionary as it is here.'[2] For unfathomable reasons, Heidegger turns his hand to his own obscure version of theoretical biology, one that

[1] McNeill, W. 'Translator's Foreword' to *FCM* p.xx. Derrida also notes that Heidegger's presentation of his comparative examination as a series of 'theses' is something that 'he practically never does elsewhere' (Derrida, J. *Of Sprit: Heidegger and the Question* trans. Bennington, G. and Bowlby, R. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press p.12).
[2] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.315

'enucleates the cow and mutilates the ape with all-too-human pieties.'[3] Krell argues that the entire endeavour is essentially the result of a 'desperate' attempt to '[dig] a ditch to separate man from animality.'[4] How are we to interpret the apparent mystery surrounding this radical reorientation of Heidegger's thinking, as well as the disappointment that is felt amongst Heidegger scholars concerning the manner in which *FCM* slips into a hierarchical metaphysics that subverts the more valuable work done in *Being and Time*?

The comparative examination

I will now look in more detail at the sections of *FCM* containing Heidegger's comparative examination in order to reveal the full extent of this mystery. If we flick through the lectures and read these sections 'cold,' our immediate impression will be that the examination of biology is part of Heidegger's general pursuit of the 'essence' (*Wesen*) of life. However, it is clear from the start that this enquiry into life will not be embarked upon in the spirit of *Lebensphilosophie*. Heidegger scorns the idea of a 'philosophy of life,' which, he claims, 'says about as much as the "botany of plants."'[5] In four short sections, which come prior to Heidegger's lengthy assessment of the contents of prevailing biological theories, Heidegger claims that the human, the animal, and the lifeless entity exhibit different relations to 'world.'[6] These hypotheses, Heidegger says, summarise the distinct manner in which the stone, the animal and man 'have' world. By this, Heidegger means the degree to which these entities have 'access' to beings.[7] According to the first thesis, the stone, though it is part of the world, has no possibility of accessing beings, of 'standing over against' world and taking a particular

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* §10 p.72
[6] Heidegger, M. *FCM* Introduction to Chapter Three, p.185
[7] Ibid., §46 p.193

attitude towards it. The stone can be put to various different uses, but it does not have any independent, autonomous capacities or opportunities for action in and of itself. In contrast, the animal, though it shares the stone's incapacity for 'standing over against world,' has limited access to beings, and a limited field of action.[8] In his elaboration of the second thesis, Heidegger claims that the life of the animal is always bound to a specific habitat. It lives its life from within what Heidegger names an 'encircling ring' (*Umring*). This ring demarcates the terrain in which the various possibilities of instinctual behaviour belonging to the animal are 'opened up.'[9] Within this sphere, the animal experiences its habitat as being open for it, as a space within which it is driven to act in accordance with its various capacities.

Though it is able to enjoy a degree of plasticity in its actions, the animal does not 'have' world in the way that the human has world. As a being that is world-poor, the animal has a merely reflexive, immediate response to stimuli that it is able to detect. The encircling rings of different species differ in breadth; more complex organisms will have a wider field of action than basic organisms. However, the animal organism, *qua* animal organism, whether it is a protozoon or a primate, will be unable to step outside of its own *Umring* in order to pursue an entirely different kind of life:

> Throughout the course of its life, the animal is confined to its environmental world, immured as it were within a fixed sphere that is incapable of further expansion or contraction.[10]

In the final thesis, Heidegger claims that man, in contrast to both the stone and the animal, is capable of 'forming' world (*weltbildend*).[11] The word *bildend* in German has various meanings, including building, accumulating, educating, cultivating, and

[8] Ibid., §42 p.177
[9] Ibid., §60 p.235
[10] Ibid., §48 p.198
[11] Ibid., §68 p.285

picturing. Rather than indicating that the human forms world as if from scratch, Heidegger's phrase seems to imply that it trans-forms and in-forms world. Though it is an embodied being, and therefore subject to various organismic constraints, the human is not bound to an encircling ring, and is therefore capable of a degree of plasticity that precludes other entities. This extended plasticity is part of what makes the human world a malleable domain in which entities are experienced 'as such' and 'as a whole.'[12] However, the implication of this idea is not that the distinction between the human and the animal is one of degree. Heidegger consistently points to an absolute, 'abyssal' difference between the two, one that is not reducible to the idea of the human's lack of confinement to an *Umring*.

Having outlined these distinct world-relations, Heidegger attempts to clarify the meaning of his claim that the animal accesses beings from within an encircling ring. If the animal world is not a 'degree or species' of the human world, and if the animal is not merely a being that is present at hand for us, then there is a problem of ascertaining the perspective of the animal, and hence the 'animality' of the animal.[13] Thus far, Heidegger has simply established that the 'specific manner of being' of the animal is 'defined by the fact that it has access of some kind,' even if this access is not as rich and extensive as that of the human.[14] Heidegger suspends further discussion of this concept of world-poverty, stating that his core aim is to clarify the question of the animal's world-relation in a '*properly primordial way*,' and that this will not be possible without examining the results of zoological research.[15]

[12] Ibid., p.282
[13] Ibid., §48 p.200
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., §50 p.212

Already we can begin to appreciate why this idea that biology can contribute something to Heidegger's three theses may seem incendiary. It looks as though Heidegger wishes to have 'the best of both worlds,' to posit abstract, hierarchical metaphysical theses on the one hand, and, in the next breath, to seek empirical support from the sciences. I will now break down the objections that are expressed in the secondary literature concerning this seemingly incoherent project.

i) The organism

Heidegger's careful examination of contemporary life science research does not appear to temper the boldness of his metaphysical claims concerning the human-animal distinction. These claims, which shape and inform Heidegger's foray into biology and zoology, are a source of discomfort for a range of commentators, according to whom Heidegger's analysis couches the human-animal distinction in a worryingly anthropocentric language. In particular, there is little talk of the human's relationship to its own drives, given that the human, like the animal, is a live being containing organs that are activated by certain capacities. Instead of providing any such discussion, Heidegger draws a distinction between animal behaviour (*Benehmen*), an enslaved, captivated (*benommen*) receptivity to drives, and human comportment (*Verhalten*), a reflective attendance and ability to either 'let be' or not let be that which is encountered.[16] *FCM* thus appears to be a re-enactment of Heidegger's refusal in *Being and Time* to incorporate a discussion of embodiment into his characterisation of Dasein.

There is a sense in which this overarching objection to Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* sets the scene for critical commentary on *FCM*. Cerbone claims that it is tempting, post-*Being and Time*, to 'look for a place for the body' in Heidegger's works, and that

[16] Ibid., §64 p.274

the amount of space dedicated to organic life in *FCM* suggests that the organism could be a likely 'candidate.'[17] However, for Krell, *FCM* does not remedy the failure in *Being and Time* to consider Dasein's body. In order to discover the distinct modes of being belonging to man and animal, Heidegger first forges an abyssal distinction between them.[18] In so doing, he has recourse to the precise same ontotheological categories and 'oblivious decisions' that he is trying to identify and displace.[19] Heidegger 'digs' an abyss between man and animal, and then confines the animal to an encircling ring that it can never depart from.[20] Man has the lofty task of 'forming' world, whilst the animal is subjected to a particular set of drives that impel it to act within an impoverished sphere.

This ordering of beings is not immediately objectionable to all commentators. Calarco argues that, *prima facie*, Heidegger's aim of establishing the 'animality of the animal' on its own terms looks like a genuine attempt to avoid anthropocentrism. He describes Heidegger's method of bracketing common sense definitions of animality, as well as those associated with human psychology, as 'provocative' and 'progressive.'[21] However, despite its initial promise, Calarco concludes, along with Krell, that Heidegger's lectures soon fall back into 'one of the most classical and dogmatic of philosophical prejudices,' eventually succumbing to the traditional hierarchy of the *scala naturae*.[22] For Krell, Heidegger's delineation of the animal world is incapable of producing or even exploring a non-anthropocentric conception of animality, since it maintains itself within a humanistic framework:

[17] Cerbone, D.R. (2000) "Heidegger and Dasein's 'Bodily Nature': What is the Hidden Problematic?" in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 8, 2, pp.209-230, p.212
[18] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.60; p.315
[19] Ibid., p.105
[20] Ibid.
[21] Calarco, M. (2008) *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press p.22
[22] Ibid., p.23

> Heidegger tries to enter into the animal's world. He tries to spell out the difference between the ways lizards and human beings sun themselves. […] The animal cannot ask about the sun *as* sun, Heidegger repeats over and over again, as though this is what the human sun-worshipper ever does.[23]

According to Krell, it remains unclear why it should be the case that, whereas the animal is never able to grasp a being 'as' what it is, the human always enacts this advantage. What, precisely, is the significance of this exposure to world that Heidegger reserves for the human? More specifically, why, of all things, does Heidegger decide to canonise the apophantic 'as' as the linchpin of the human's essence? Krell follows Derrida in this enquiry:

> [Derrida] is most concerned to ask whether *human* being itself ever *properly* apprehends anything *as* such – that is to say, *as* self-showing. Are we not intrinsically oblivious of the opening, the clearing, and the granting of time and being? Whether apophantic discourse *ever* confronts the clearing under any circumstance is in Derrida's view entirely dubious. We recall his challenging his students by asking them whether *they* have ever encountered the world *as* world. I suspect that not a single Dasein raised its timorous prehensile organ in the affirmative.[24]

Aside from critiquing this enshrining of the 'as' structure, Krell argues that the concept of captivation as something exclusively animalistic is inherently confused. This is because the dazed absorption of the animal is something that the human, on Heidegger's own understanding, tends to participate in. Krell points out that Heidegger's word for 'captivation,' *Benommenheit*, is used in *Being and Time* to describe 'fallen' Dasein. Heidegger claims that in everydayness Dasein is 'dazzled' by its concernful dealings with entities, 'so that a merely theoretical "gaping" at things as though they were merely "at hand" is at first impossible.'[25] Heidegger suggests that 'in

[23] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.116
[24] Krell, D.F. (2013) *Derrida and Our Animal Others*: *Derrida's Final Seminar "The Beast and the Sovereign"* Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press p.113
[25] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.10

its familiarity with innerworldly beings Dasein can "lose itself" and be "dazed" by those beings.'[26] He 'says of the "absorption" (*Aufgehen*) of Dasein in everydayness, "[a]t first and for the most part, Dasein is benumbed by its world."'[27] It thus seems to be the case that 'Dasein comports itself in the world precisely in the way animals behave in theirs.'[28] If truth and untruth are equiprimordial modes of Dasein's being, then a large proportion of Dasein's time is spent occupying a world that is akin to that of the animal.

In addition to this ontological overlap between human and animal life, which, according to Krell, Heidegger seems to introduce accidentally, there is the separate matter, MacIntyre argues, of the dubiousness of the idea of the encircling ring of the animal. Heidegger ignores the obviously complex ways in which various species, including primates, dogs and dolphins, structure their environment. These species, MacIntyre says, 'do not merely respond to features of their environment, they actively explore it; they devote perceptual attention to the objects that they encounter, they inspect them from different angles, they recognise the familiar, they identify and classify, they may on occasion treat one and the same object first as something to be played with and then as something to be eaten, and some of them recognise and even grieve for what is absent.'[29] These various capacities portray a set of 'belief presupposing and belief-guided intentions' that are acted upon often in collaboration with other animals.[30] The idea that each creature has its own strictly limited environmental niche within which it only responds to a specific series of stimuli, and beyond which entities are meaningless

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] MacIntyre, A. (1999) *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* London: Duckworth p.46
[30] Ibid.

for it, amounts, according to MacIntyre, to a grossly over-simplified depiction of animal life. Not only do different creatures structure, augment and change their environments at will, they use their sense organs, MacIntyre says, for different effects and to different degrees.[31] The character of an animal's sensory capacities cannot possibly be summarised in a statement as basic as Heidegger's claim that 'the animal is poor in world.'[32]

ii) Language

Heidegger associates the animal's diminutive access to world with its complete absence of language, which he reserves exclusively for the world-forming human. Having stated repeatedly that the core of the phenomenon of world-formation is man's ability to grasp entities 'as such' and 'as a whole,' Heidegger questions more closely how we should consider the structure of this 'as.' He begins by claiming that a merely linguistic interpretation of different parts of speech will not suffice, since 'this "as" is no mere whim of language, but is clearly somehow grounded in the meaning of Dasein itself.'[33] Language is to be understood as the capacity to disclose something '*as*' what it is. Heidegger explores this 'as' in *FCM* not as a linguistic tool, but as something that Dasein is always already familiar with prior to its linguistic utterances.[34] It is correct, Heidegger says, to claim that the human navigates its world by making propositional statements about things, statements that may be deemed either 'true' or 'false' depending on whether or not they correctly inform us about some entity or state of affairs.[35] However, this way of approaching language only takes us so far when it

[31] Ibid.
[32] MacIntyre claims that 'while these sensory differences may make it difficult on occasion to *imagine* how some animals apprehend what they apprehend, the limitations of imagination should not be allowed to obscure the extent to which and the ways in which the perceptual and intentional achievements of such animals are obscured and misconstrued from Heidegger's perspective' (Ibid.).
[33] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §69a) p.287
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

comes to understanding the 'as.' Heidegger claims that, first and foremost, the statement's capacity to deliver information, i.e. to disclose the way in which something 'is,' is due to the fact that it 'contains a *manifestness of the matter itself*.'[36] By this Heidegger means that the structure of the statement that '*makes manifest*' the entities about which it is uttered 'bears' the 'as' 'within itself.'[37] Man, according to this view, possesses the possibility of disclosing the way in which entities are manifested 'as such' and 'as a whole.' This possibility arises as a result of man's participation in *logos*. We should however be wary, Heidegger says, of the definition of *logos* as 'everything that is spoken and sayable.'[38] This definition obscures the essential meaning of *logos*, which denotes more than 'our vocabulary taken as a whole.'[39] Heidegger wishes to define *logos* as 'the fundamental faculty of being able to talk discursively, and accordingly, to speak.'[40] On this basis, Heidegger says, the Greeks characterised the human as *zōon logon echon*, 'that living being that essentially possesses the possibility of discourse,' as distinct from the animal, which lacks any possibility of discourse.[41]

For Heidegger, something crucial in our understanding of the essence of the human was lost with the translation of *zōon logon echon* into the Latin *animal rationale*. The latter term depicts the human as an animal plus some extra-natural property, an idea that Heidegger strongly resists. Moreover, the move from *logos* to *ratio* leads to a somewhat impoverished conception of language, one that forms the basis of the 'traditional' method of assessing the truth value of assertions. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempts to locate the origin of this traditional conception of truth as 'correspondence'

[36] Ibid., p.288
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., §72a) p.305
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

in a more 'primordial' conception of truth.[42] He claims that the Latinisation of *logos* entailed the forgetting of the original meaning of the assertion, according to which the assertion's 'being true' does not simply refer to its correspondence with something in the world, as if truth were contained in the bare utterance itself, and did not incorporate an edifice of concepts and suppositions. Rather, when it is said of an assertion that it is true, this refers to the fact that the assertion functions as an exercise of uncovering, i.e. it discloses the way in which an entity is. Rather than defining the entity in terms of 'what' it is, the uncovering of the assertion reveals entities '*in the "how" of their uncoveredness.*'[43] *Logos*, Heidegger claims, is a mode of 'letting something be seen,' and, as such, it 'tells how entities comport themselves.'[44] In other words, the entity is '*discovered*' in the true assertion.[45] It is only those beings that possess 'understanding,' and 'speak' that are capable of being told through *logos* how entities comport themselves. Heidegger insists that for those entities that lack in understanding, i.e. nonhuman entities, 'what they do remains hidden,' and they will thus 'forget it [...] that is, for them it sinks back into hiddenness.'[46]

It is the *logos* understood in this way as an exercise of truth, a way of disclosing entities *as* what they are, that Heidegger denies, wholesale, to the animal. Animals produce utterances that 'indicate something,' but these utterances are not 'words.'[47] They are 'merely ψόφοι, noises. They are vocal utterances (φωνή) that lack something, namely, *meaning*. The animal does not mean or understand by its call.'[48] It is often claimed, Heidegger says, that whereas the animal produces a vocal utterance, the human

[42] Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* §44
[43] Ibid., §44b) p.262
[44] Ibid., *Introduction IIB* p.57, §44b) p.262
[45] Ibid., *Introduction IIB* p.57
[46] Ibid., §44b) p.262
[47] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §72 p.307
[48] Ibid.

produces a vocal utterance 'with meaning attached to it.'[49] This assumption that noises are somehow supplemented with meaning in the case of human thinks the relation between meaning and utterance in the wrong direction, inferring from utterances towards meaning. The situation, Heidegger claims, is 'quite the reverse:'

> From the very beginning our essence is such as to understand and form the possibility of understanding. It is because our essence is like this that utterances that we also produce have a meaning. Meaning does not accrue to sounds, but the reverse: the sound is first forged from meanings that are forming and have already formed. The λόγος is indeed φωνή, yet not primarily and then something else besides, but rather the reverse: it is primarily something else and then also… φωνή.[50]

For Aristotle this 'something else' is interpreted as '*σύμβολον*,' which refers, Heidegger says, to a 'joint, seam, or hinge, in which one thing is not simply brought together with the other, but the two are held to one another, so that they fit one another. Whatever is held together, fits together so that the two parts prove to belong together, is σύμβολον.'[51] Heidegger claims that discourse is meaningful, i.e. it 'forms a sphere of *understandability*' only when there is this 'being held together,' where there is the 'genesis of a symbol.'[52] Animal utterances are noises rather than words, because they are not formed on the basis of this 'holding together' of 'agreement.' Like Aristotle, Heidegger insists that the *logos* ought not to be treated as a physiological activity that occurs in the vocal tract, as if it were a biological process amongst other biological processes.[53] The capacity to produce words rather than noises is rooted in this concept of 'agreement.' An account of the origin of language would need to examine the way in which the ability to form words emerges from out of this '*essential agreement* of human

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid. Note that *σύμβολον* is often translated as 'symbol,' but Heidegger argues that we should be wary of this overly simplistic this translation.
[52] Ibid., p.308
[53] Ibid., p.309

beings with one another, in accordance with which they are *open in their being with one another for the beings around them*, which they can then individually agree about — and this also means fail to agree about.'[54]

The human's relationship to the *logos* therefore facilitates its peculiar 'being open for…,' which 'has the character of *apprehending something as something*,' and the capacity to articulate it.[55] This is what is meant by Heidegger's claim that the human comports itself *towards* beings, rather than being captivated *by* them. Haar argues that this denial of language to the animal is one of the most extreme aspects of Heidegger's account of animality:

> The absence of speech in animals is more radical than the absence of the world. It is not a question of an *impoverished* language but of an absolute privation of speech. On this point the break between humans and animals seems the most unbridgeable.[56]

The non-negotiable tone of Heidegger's denial of animal language irks many readers of the lecture course, not only because it appears, as Aho points out, to '[disregard] the possibility of the animal's primitive but meaningful social language embodied in forms of gestures, cries and expressions,' but because it posits apophantic discourse as the cornerstone of our own human essence.[57] Krell criticises what he sees as 'the elevation' in the lecture course of 'the usual way we assert this *as* that, "S *as being* p," and so on – to central importance,' an elevation which, he says, 'seems so entirely un-Heideggerian. Early and late Heidegger stresses the derivative character of such discourse. In […] *Being and Time*, he reveals the founding importance of the "existential-hermeneutic-

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p.306
[56] Haar, M. (1993) *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being* trans. Lilly, R. and Sallis, J. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press p.29
[57] Aho, K. (2009) *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* New York, NY: State University of New York Press p.78

as," that is, the way our dealings with things in the world do not initially express their significance in any linguistic form at all. I know what the hammer is to be used *as*, especially if it is too heavy and therefore will not serve *as* such, without making statements about it.'[58] For Krell, the emphasis placed on the assertion in *FCM*, which undercuts the analysis of *logos* in *Being and Time*, and the simultaneous rejection of the idea of meaningful modes of verbal expression amongst animals, portrays a dogmatic urge to preserve an absolute distinction between the human and the animal, one that subverts the more subtle and cautious analysis of *Being and Time*. For Krell, the fact that zoological and primatological evidence challenges the repudiation of animal language is not the only cause for concern. He claims that Heidegger's investigation also expresses a profound lack of imagination when it comes to the perhaps multivalent perspective of the animal:

> [D]oes it not make sense to think more generously of other life-forms, as poor at *apophansis* as they may be, and to open ourselves up to the possibility that they too are open to an infinitely variegated world – they simply do not feel the need to talk about it much? Why? Perhaps they fear that apophantic discourse will never do justice to the coral reef in the sea or the shifting winds of the sky or the scents of the earth, or perhaps even to the stick they use – a stick *as* a stick tool – to dislodge a ripe fruit.[59]

It appears that, despite his examination of contemporary biology, Heidegger does not take on board research that explicitly situates the human and the animal within the same biological continuum. For example, Heidegger does not mention the recent experiments of Wolfgang Köhler, which indicate a sophisticated system of communication amongst anthropoid primates.[60] The implication seems to be, according to Haar, that the comparative investigation will have little to say about how animals actually are, and

[58] Krell, D.F. *Derrida and our Animal Others* p.112
[59] Ibid., p.113
[60] See Köhler, W. (1948) *The Mentality of Apes* trans. Winter, E. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

will essentially only tell us about ourselves.[61] The purpose of the lectures, Haar suggests, 'seems to be an exorcism, a de-mystification of the "link" with nature. Heidegger wants to show the impossibility of an *original* and fundamental implication or entanglement of human Dasein in living beings, to destroy the idea of an *animal lineage*, to exclude the myth of natural perfection as emphasised from Rousseau to Bergson. Not only is instinct not superior to intelligence, but it is far inferior to the simple understanding of being.'[62] By the end of his analysis of animality, it seems that, having outlined the need to pay heed to the fateful 'inner unity' between science and metaphysics, Heidegger essentially wishes to relegate concrete empirical evidence that directly undermines his metaphysical statements of essence.[63]

iii) *Mitsein* and selfhood

In order to be meaningful, discourse, Heidegger says, must involve a 'being held together,' i.e. a shared symbolic awareness that enables the signification of utterances.[64] This symbolic character of language takes place against the backdrop of a social world in which entities are disclosed in a mutually comprehensible way. By claiming that discourse is irreducibly social, it appears as if Heidegger wishes to deny the animal both language and a meaningful social world in the same move. Heidegger insists that human language is not comprised of animal noises with meaning added; one cannot describe the distinction between the human and the animal using separate components that are added or subtracted. However, it appears as if, when it comes to the question of language, Heidegger has deducted all meaning from animal utterances and simultaneously ignored any possibility of an animal *Mitsein*. In so doing he commits

[61] Haar, M. *The Song of the Earth* p.29
[62] Ibid.
[63] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §45b) p.189
[64] Ibid., §72a) p.308

himself to the idea that the capacity to make meaningful utterances depends exclusively upon a social milieu that belongs only to Dasein. As Aho argues, according to Heidegger's account even infants who have not yet developed language are included in world-formation rather than world-poverty insofar as they are 'immediately immersed in a meaningful public background,' a domain of interpersonal conventions that form the fabric of Dasein's world.[65] The *logos*, Aho says, is to be understood 'as the medium that arises out of the shared acts and practices of a historical people, and it is a medium that human beings immediately grow into and one that colours all of their factical experiences.'[66] The disinhibiting ring of the animal only encircles its narrow range of stimuli, and does not encircle a 'we.' Animals cannot be included in this realm of meaningful social engagements; they are neither 'with us' nor with one another. This, like the absolute preclusion of the possibility of animal language, seems incompatible with empirical observations of sociality and communication amongst animals.[67] Glendinning argues that the *a priori* rejection of the possibility of community in animal life is part of what makes Heidegger's theses so 'stubbornly unrevisable.'[68] Having marked out *Mitsein* as one of the constituents of Dasein in his existential analytic, Heidegger cannot possibly take seriously the idea that animals may participate in a 'we' without 'recasting the existential analytic as a whole.'[69]

The question of the world-relation of the pre-linguistic infant indicates a further major objection to Heidegger's comparative examination. Aho argues that the infant is to be included, according to Heidegger's guidelines, in world-formation because it is born

[65] Aho, K. *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* p.90
[66] Ibid., p.91
[67] Although intersubjectivity research into non-human primates did not begin until the 1970s, by the time of Heidegger's lecture course Köhler's experiments had demonstrated complex cooperative capacities in chimpanzees (see Köhler, W. (1948) *The Mentality of Apes*).
[68] Glendinning, S. (1998) *On Being with Others: Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida* London: Routledge p.69
[69] Ibid.

into a public domain in which it begins to structure a world of meaning for itself. This process amounts to 'learning how to be a "self" (*Selbst*),' and depends on a capacity for selfhood in the first instance.[70] Heidegger insists that comportment, as opposed to animal captivation, in which an attitude is taken towards beings – one that is capable of deciding whether or not to 'let be' the beings that are encountered – depends upon this selfhood:

> [A]ll comportment is only possible in a certain restraint [*Verhaltenheit*] and comporting [*Verhaltung*], and a stance [*Haltung*] is only given where a being has the character of a self or, as we also say, of a person.[71]

The animal is denied this capacity for selfhood: 'Nothing of this kind is to be found in animality or in life in general.'[72] For Krell, this rejection of the possibility of animal selfhood is one in which '[e]very classical philosopheme of anthropocentric metaphysics and morals […] intervenes with a vengeance.'[73] The analysis is particularly problematic, since it follows shortly after Heidegger's discussion of organic life, in which he ascribes to the organism the characteristics of self-production, self-regulation and self-renewal, powers which differentiate the organism from the machine.[74] Despite using this vocabulary of intentional self-driving, Heidegger insists that this description has nothing to do with the kind of selfhood that is to be reserved for Dasein. This is because each instinctual capacity of the organism is reflexive and non-decisional. The capacity 'remains *proper to itself* – and does so *without* any so-called *self-consciousness* or any *reflection* at all, without any relating back to itself. That is why we say that on account of this essential being proper to itself the capacity is

[70] Aho, K. *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* p.91
[71] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §64 p.274
[72] Ibid.
[73] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.121
[74] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §53 p.222

properly peculiar. We shall reserve the expression "self" and selfhood to characterise the *specifically human peculiarity, its* particular way of being proper to itself.'[75] In the case of the human, it is not just its biological capacities that are 'proper to' it, rather its 'self *as such*' is proper to it. The human always relates back to itself in a detached reflectiveness. However, Heidegger does not attempt to establish a gradual distinction between organisms, in which their degree of selfhood is commensurate with their organic complexity. Rather, he retains the idea of an enigmatic gulf between man and animal, where only the former can be described as having selfhood.

iv) Death and time

Not only is the animal deprived of high degrees of organic plasticity, language, sociality and selfhood, it is also deprived of temporality and finitude. Apart from reinforcing the theme of the superiority of the human over the animal, the denial of animal temporality and finitude is especially contentious for Krell, because Heidegger accidentally brings the animal and the human into a close ontological proximity where these two characteristics are concerned. Krell states that for Heidegger, the different dimensions of human and animal life are to be understood as '*Hingehaltenheit* and *Hingenommenheit*, being held out in the world and being taken in by it.'[76] These dimensions are supposed to designate a distinction between the human and the animal's relationship to death and time. Regarding the first of these, as Heidegger claims in *Being and Time*, 'the nothing' invades human life in the sense that Dasein is exposed to the imminence and inevitability of its own non-existence. The animal, on the other hand, is never subjected to the possibility of its own negation. For the animal, insofar as it is essentially captivated, does not die 'in the sense in which dying [*sterben*] is

[75] Ibid., §56 p.233
[76] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.110

ascribed to human beings,' but rather 'comes to an end' (*verenden*).[77] The struggle for survival that all animal species undergo is, for Heidegger, nothing to do with the anticipation and avoidance of death, since the possibility of death does not 'show up' for the animal in its encircling ring. Such struggles are to be understood simply in terms of the disinhibition of certain organic drives. Krell is unconvinced by the distinction between animal perishing and human dying, *verenden* and *sterben*, and argues that Heidegger is unjustified in denying this ultimate negativity to animal life:

> Are animals deathless? Does their perishing make them infinite? Or does the nothing invade animal life as well as the life of Dasein?[78]

In order to interrogate the distinction, Krell compares Heidegger's claim that the animal is 'essentially exposed to something other,' (*hinausgestellt in ein Anderes*), with his claim that Dasein is 'held out into the nothing,' (*Hinausgehaltenheit in das Nichts*).[79] Just as non-existence impinges upon human life, the animal's life is shaped, determined and suspended by something other than it, i.e. that which disinhibits its drives, and thus compels it to act. Heidegger states that 'that which disinhibits, with all the various forms of disinhibition it entails, brings an *essential disruption* into the essence of the animal.'[80] That which is other to the animal dictates its behaviour, and this having of a relationship to an other brings the animal into a close ontological proximity to the human. Heidegger's response to this unintended kinship is to state that the claims he has made regarding the animal's world-relation are merely provisional, and that animality is something yet to be clarified.[81] For Krell, this response is inadequate;

[77] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61 p.267
[78] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.118
[79] Ibid., p.131
[80] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §63 p.273
[81] Ibid.

Heidegger has closed the discussion of the second thesis by raising a problem that it is beyond the scope of his investigation to solve.[82]

Heidegger's refusal of temporality to the animal is considered by Krell and others to be just as contentious as his refusal of animal *sterben*. This is due to Heidegger's description of the animal as a being that is comprised of finite organs that develop in accordance with a set of capacities that 'institute a span between birth and death.'[83] If this is the case, then the organism, as a living being, will have its own mode of temporality.[84] The poverty of the animal is related to the fact that its organs are the 'articulation' of highly limited, temporally bound capacities.[85] And yet man, too, has organs. Why, Krell asks, does Heidegger present his discussion of the organism's relationship to time 'as though the human beings who shape their world were suddenly purged of organs and thus rescued from the constraints of time?'[86] And why does he fail to acknowledge the fact that the impoverished structure of the animal organ surely encapsulates the human too, as a being that possesses organs, which is something that Heidegger never denies? If captivation is 'fundamentally constitutive' of the animal, and being-in-the-world is fundamentally constitutive of Dasein, then Heidegger's lengthy discussion of captivation can have little relevance for Dasein.[87] This would only be unproblematic, Franck argues, if it were the case that '*Dasein* were not alive and could be thought without organs.'[88] For Krell, Heidegger does not account for the distinction between the finite temporality of animal life, and the finite temporality of

[82] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.128
[83] Ibid., p.120
[84] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §53 p.224
[85] Ibid., §60b) p.255
[86] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.120
[87] Franck, D. (1991) "Being and the Living" in Cadava, E. Connor, P. and Nancy, J.L. (eds) *Who Comes After the Subject?* London: Routledge p.141
[88] Ibid., p.144

human organs. Rather, he simply retreats back into the mysterious distinction between perishing and dying.

v) Differentiation

The above objections to the comparative examination are based on the idea that, in the end, Heidegger pays little attention to animals and is only concerned with them as a contrast case to human beings. This concern is reinforced by the observation that, within the animal realm, Heidegger does not recognise any significant internal differentiation. He states that the thesis that the animal is poor in world 'does not tell us something merely about insects or merely about mammals, since it also includes […] non-articulated creatures, unicellular animals like amoebae, infusoria, sea urchins and the like – *all* animals, *every* animal. Expressed in a rather extrinsic way we could say that our thesis is more universal than these other propositions. Yet why is it more universal, and in what respect? Because this thesis is meant to say something about animality as such, something about the essence of the animal: it is a *statement of essence*.'[89] 'Animal' is therefore treated as a single category that requires no further ontological classification. Though Heidegger includes in his discussion examples of various different types of creature including birds, insects and reptiles, he does not take seriously the possibility that amongst these creatures there may be multiple different kinds of world-relation. The idea that all organisms from amoebae to chimpanzees can be described by a single 'statement of essence' appears to be profoundly unscientific, or anti-scientific. The thesis on animality, Derrida says 'presupposes […] that there is one thing, one domain, one homogeneous type of entity, which is called animality *in general*, for which any example would do the job. This is a thesis which, in its *median* character, as clearly emphasised by Heidegger (the animal *between* the stone and man),

[89] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §45a) p.186

remains fundamentally teleological and traditional.'[90] Heidegger considers only two distinctions to be necessary for his investigation into different world-relations: that between non-living matter and the living organism, and that between the living organism and man. But a phenomenology of animality that does not take the trouble of at least beginning an examination of the multiple ways in which 'world' becomes manifest for different animals, which may differ, for example, between vertebrates and invertebrates, cold and warm blooded organisms, or according to cognitive capacities, seems dubious.

Calarco commends what he sees as an attempt on Heidegger's part to tackle the 'complicated relationship' between biology and philosophy, examining 'the role philosophy might play in determining the Being of animal life – a task that is reserved solely for the sciences.'[91] However, it seems that this effort to both furnish his own metaphysical enquiry with the results of empirical research, and to ground the sciences by examining their metaphysical claims, will fall short if Heidegger fails to attend to the taxonomical customs of biology, which differentiates between beings based on myriad and minute details. Moreover, the motive behind the brute difference in kind that Heidegger examines is not itself subject to any interrogation:

> Even though Heidegger initially acknowledges that "it is difficult to determine … the distinction between man and animal" – an acknowledgement that helps to prevent his discussion from falling back into common sense presuppositions about the human-animal distinction – the question concerning *whether such a distinction between human beings and animals can or even should be drawn* is never raised for serious discussion.[92]

[90] Derrida, J. *Of Sprit: Heidegger and the Question* p.57
[91] Calarco, M. *Zoographies* pp.18-19
[92] Ibid., p.23

Krell goes a step further, arguing that it is to his detriment that Heidegger 'does not pause to wonder whether his own highest aspiration, his search for the *essence* of animality and all life in each amoeba and every ape, is the kind of high-altitude thinking that spawns all of the other hierarchies' that his philosophy generally opposes.[93] Given that the task of producing a unified essence of all modes of animality is problematic from a biological perspective, and given Heidegger's claim that his examination 'cannot be elucidated independently' of the life sciences, there appears to be an internal confusion in his methodology.[94]

The mystery of Heidegger's 'animal lectures'

The implication of the above analysis appears to be that Heidegger's definition of animality is a privative, unimaginative, ontotheological one that begins from the perspective of our own human existence and deducts various traits from it. Krell sees an unapologetic anthropocentrism in this preoccupation with the human. Having dismissed *Lebensphilosophie* in *Being and Time* for failing to ground or even approach the meaning of 'life,' Heidegger is then unable to establish a vision of life and the human's relationship to life that is not 'expressed in terms of addition, subtraction or privation.'[95] Heidegger's fatal error, according to MacIntyre, is to base his investigation into animality on the premise that 'we can *only* understand nonhuman animals by contrast with our own human condition and what all nonhuman animals share is a lack of what human beings have: a relationship to beings in which not only are beings disclosed, but the difference between beings and being is disclosed.'[96] For MacIntyre, this grouping together of all non-human animals not only disregards the many and complex

[93] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.115
[94] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §45a) p.186
[95] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.104
[96] MacIntyre, A. *Dependent Rational Animals* p.45

differences between species, it also misses the significance of the human's relationship to its own animality and naturalness.[97] In striving so hard to keep humans and non-humans apart, Heidegger fails to recognise what our kinship to animals, the great apes in particular, can reveal about our own human existence and behaviour:

> [O]ur whole initial bodily comportment towards the world is originally an animal comportment, and […] when, through having become language-users, we under the guidance of parents and others restructure that comportment, elaborate and in new ways correct our beliefs and redirect our activities, we never make ourselves independent of our animal nature and inheritance.[98]

To an extent this close kinship with animals is due to the fact that aspects of our physiology are unchanged. In cases where certain human traits appear to indicate a gulf of difference between the human and the animal, we should not assume that, just because many of the human's characteristics will be modulated as it becomes enculturated into a specific society, that the genesis of these characteristics is not fundamentally natural or animalistic. For MacIntyre, the fact that we have developed our own peculiarly human ways of 'being-in-the-world' does not mean that we are justified in making the further, anthropocentric inference that being-in-the-world *as such* is an exclusively human privilege. All in all, the lectures fail, according to MacIntyre, to complete their original task of determining the animality of the animal.

Almost all commentators on Heidegger's animal lectures express the concerns discussed in this chapter. They all stem from the basic worry that Heidegger reasserts a range of humanist prejudices in a new vocabulary and, in so doing, strikes up a paradoxical relationship to the life sciences in which he attempts to adopt their perspective whilst simultaneously neglecting some of their most important findings. In

[97] Ibid., p.48
[98] Ibid., p.49

Being and Time Heidegger states that the analytic of Dasein is to be differentiated from anthropology and biology, which, despite their 'objective fertility,' are unable to grasp Dasein as a whole in its essential ground.[99] However, shortly after making this observation it seems that, in *FCM*, Heidegger wishes to reject, outright, certain aspects of this scientific fertility. Whilst intending to seek support for his three theses by drawing on zoology and biology, Heidegger fails to provide convincing counterarguments to the empirical claims that undermine them. Having initially expressed optimism about the relationship between metaphysics and science, Heidegger then weaves in and out of the empirical material in a way that leaves the reader unclear regarding the precise role biology and zoology are playing in the analysis. The thesis on animality, which is expressed as an absolutist metaphysical maxim, would not be palatable from a zoological perspective, since, as Calarco points out, no zoologist or ethologist 'would be willing to make statements about the world-relations of animals *as such* when such structures have yet to be investigated empirically in most animal species.'[100] If the fundamental aim is, as the commentators discussed in this chapter all seem to believe, to safeguard the position of the human as an entity that is separated off from the animal by an abyss of essence, rather than to ascertain the essence of animality, then it is not clear why Heidegger needs to refer at such length to zoology and biology.

Even if the aim of the lectures is simply to secure the status of Dasein's being, the anthropocentrism of this attempt seriously confuses matters. Whilst it is clear, from the perspective of Derrida, Krell and Glendinning, that the lectures elevate the human above the animal, they also leave the impression that the human's own distinct form of

[99] Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* §10 p.71
[100] Calarco, M. *Zoographies* p.27

life is so insignificant when it comes to the essence of human existence that it is not worth serious consideration. Heidegger insists that his investigation 'allows no evaluative ranking or assessment with respect to completeness or incompleteness,' because when we compare our bodies with those of other creatures we find that we have none of their sensory acuity and physiological robustness:

> [W]e immediately find ourselves in the greatest perplexity over the question concerning greater or lesser completeness in each case with respect to the accessibility of beings, as soon as we compare the discriminatory capacity of a falcon's eye with that of the human eye, or the canine sense of smell with our own, for example.[101]

This statement contains a rare mention of human organic capacities, which are characterised negatively, as lacking the keenness of the falcon or dog's equivalent organs. The question arises as to whether Heidegger considers the human body to be irrelevant to his account of the essence of man, and if this is why he does not discuss the bodily kinship between humans and other primates. Not only is the human body treated as an ontologically non-essential adjunct, it is described as somehow meagre when compared to the high functionality of the animal organ. On the one hand, the human body appears to be a kind of radicalisation of the organism on account of the human's capacity for selfhood, which enables it to 'let beings be.' On the other hand, however, human senses are described, in the above passage, as being comparatively feeble.

For Krell, Heidegger's 'colossal failure' in the lecture course to establish the status of the human body was set in motion in *Being and Time*.[102] In the latter text Heidegger does not dedicate any space to the human organism as the vehicle that enables Dasein to

[101] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §46 p.194
[102] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.128

have any type of world-relation.[103] Didier Franck argues along the same lines, claiming that despite his neglect of the body, 'the being of the equipment as being-at-hand presupposes the being of the hand, something that nothing in the hermeneutic gives us to understand since the ecstatic constitution of existence cannot be reconciled with its incarnation.'[104] This ineluctable division between existence and incarnation, which, Franck argues, ultimately implies that 'the disappearance of the body is the *phenomenological price* for the appearance of Being,' means that Heidegger's analytic of Dasein fails to incorporate what Jonas describes as the 'crass and demanding materiality' of the body into his vision of the essence of man.[105]

Having placed Heidegger's comparative examination in the context of the problem of the living body in *Being and Time*, we are left with two concerns: firstly, Heidegger's analysis appears to derogate animality by placing it below humanity. Secondly, Heidegger never manages to face up to the notion that, like world-poverty, world-formation is housed within a perishable body containing a system of organs. He thus appears to derogate the animality *in* man both by refusing to discuss it and by alluding to it as meagre in comparison to the far more acute and well adapted animal organism. Both of these problems concern Heidegger's relationship to positive science in *FCM*. In *Being and Time* this matter is clearer: biology, anthropology and psychology are regional ontologies that cannot describe Dasein in its essential ground, and Heidegger therefore marginalises them. However, in Part Two of *FCM* Heidegger wishes to place biology and zoology at the centre of his investigation. He carefully analyses some of the

[103] Ibid., p.52
[104] Franck, D. "Being and the Living" p.144
[105] Ibid., p.146; Jonas, H. (1994) "Philosophy at the End of the Century: A Survey of its Past and Future" in *Social Research* Vol. 61, 4, pp.813-832, p.820

most recent breakthroughs in biology, whilst apparently attempting to avoid biology's metaphysical commitments.

The suspicions of the commentators discussed in this chapter appear entirely reasonable. It certainly seems unclear precisely what insights Heidegger can glean from biology if he insists on preserving an unbridgeable gulf between human and animal life. What, then, are we to make of his decision to follow his postulation of metaphysically abstract, classical divisions between beings with a close engagement with contemporary biology? Is the amount of biological research in the lecture course merely a matter of academic diligence, as Krell believes it is?[106] If Heidegger has already made up his mind about the 'essentiality' of these distinctions then any inclusion of biological research is surely redundant, especially an inclusion of such detailed material.

At first glance, the Krellian reading therefore looks entirely plausible. However, if *FCM* does indeed promote the hierarchical prejudices that Krell et al. charge it with, the entire project would be so transparently self-contradictory that this possibility seems highly unlikely. Would Heidegger really make himself vulnerable to such a rudimentary critique by presenting us with an impolitic endorsement of classical ontological stratifications, an endorsement that contains all of the metaphysical suppositions that his work generally encourages us to be suspicious of?

I wish to respond to this question with the hermeneutic clarity and charity that I consider to be lacking in the Krellian interpretation. Upon closer consideration, it seems unlikely that Heidegger, who is generally not averse to making metaphysical claims that lack deep empirical substantiation and exemplification, would include a long discussion of empirical science research for the sake of academic diligence. Krell describes the

[106] Krell, D.F. *Derrida and Our Animal Others* p.67

ease with which, in general, Heidegger's thought denounces the possibility that 'essences' may be sought in ontic properties: technology is nothing technological, humanity nothing humanistic, and animality nothing zoological.[107] Why then, would Heidegger bother to shore up his investigation into the world-relation of the animal with myriad results of laboratory experiments, particularly when his thought tends to be abstract and alien from the perspective of the sciences? Is it perhaps the case that these results have a more profound significance for his investigation, that his speculations regarding biology are in the service of more subtle, deeper goals that are not immediately obvious? Though Krell alludes briefly to the important issue of the 'reciprocal relation of philosophy and the life sciences' in Heidegger's thought, and comments on the need to 'look carefully' at how Heidegger 'respond[s] to science,' he does not undergo this examination himself in his reading of *FCM*, despite the fact that, in this text, the relationship between metaphysics and science is continually at stake.[108] Krell registers the deep and confusing incongruity of Heidegger's so-called animal lectures without questioning further the possible origins of this confusion.

The alternative interpretation of *FCM* that I will present in the remainder of this thesis will argue that the 'Krellian' reading described here rests on a profound misunderstanding insofar as it neglects the very specific metaphysical context in which Heidegger makes claims about animality. Out of the many sections of the lecture course, Krell et al. focus most sharply on the few in which Heidegger outlines his comparative examination. There are various reasons why commentary on *FCM* is dedicated almost exclusively to this part of the lecture course, and I will explore these reasons towards the end of the thesis. I now wish to begin to unfurl the contents of the

[107] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p. 114
[108] Krell, D.F. *Derrida and our Animal Others* p.93

many unexplored passages of the lecture course that surround and frame Heidegger's comparative examination in order to establish a new approach. In this new approach I will demonstrate another side to *FCM* as a cohesive metaphysical project with dramatic, under-celebrated ambitions, ambitions that cannot possibly be captured in isolated readings of the 'animal lectures.'

Chapter Two: An invitation to philosophise: Reading Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal*

Retrieving the neglected sections of FCM: *the 'co-belonging' between man and metaphysics*

A quick glance at the contents pages of Heidegger's lecture course reveals just how limited an amount of space is dedicated to the theme of animal life. Of the fourteen chapters, the animal features in three. The title of the lecture course designates its subject matter as the three 'fundamental concepts of metaphysics,' world, finitude and solitude; no mention of animals, life or biology. And yet, as the previous chapter sought to show, Heidegger's zoological reflections, which come towards the end of the text, are the foremost association that *FCM* has in secondary literature. Heidegger's comparative examination tends to be lifted out of the main body of the lecture course and treated independently. This would be unproblematic, were it not for the fact that the eleven chapters that surround Heidegger's claims about biology and animal life construct a critical metaphysical context in which to understand these claims. Ignoring this context means that the claims appear random, uncharacteristic and spurious. In this chapter I will begin to retrieve this lost metaphysical background by examining Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal*, comprised of the three opening chapters in which Heidegger delimits the scope and aims of the entire lecture course.

Knowledge of the crucial planning that Heidegger undergoes in the *Preliminary Appraisal* is undetectable in the various accounts of *FCM* described in the previous chapter. However, if we examine these prefatory reflections, we soon discover that Heidegger takes as his central aim not the production of a comparative account of animal life, but rather the facilitation of a kind of 'invitation' to philosophise.

Heidegger appears to want to engender, amongst his listeners, an attitude that will enable them to do metaphysics for themselves, and, ultimately, to grasp world, finitude and solitude as the perennial, most foundational concepts of metaphysics. Bracketing any prior knowledge of philosophy that his listeners may be in possession of, Heidegger attempts, in an almost Hegelian spirit, to use the *Preliminary Appraisal* to go right back to the beginning and lay out what is at stake in the very concept of metaphysics, and from there to witness the manner in which this concept mutates throughout the history of philosophy. Heidegger claims that it is only by gaining an understanding of what metaphysics itself is that we will be capable of comprehending the idea of a fundamental concept *of* metaphysics.[1]

This endeavour to define metaphysics immediately proves to be obscurely complex. This is chiefly because metaphysics, Heidegger says, tends to be reduced to other disciplines, masquerading as both 'science' and 'worldview.'[2] Metaphysics looks like a science, because it aims, through a process of questioning and proof, to yield results about the nature and order of things. However, it is equally likely to appear as a plethora of conflicting, often radically subjective opinions, and therefore as entirely distinct from science. However, Heidegger insists that metaphysics is unlike either of these branches of knowledge in an important respect: metaphysics uses its own resources to question itself. Unlike the positive sciences, which are unable to either pose or answer the question of their origin and conceptual ground from within that ground, metaphysics determines itself in and through its own activity. To this extent, metaphysics cannot be treated as a 'fixed discipline,' one that we encounter externally.[3] If this seems counterintuitive, Heidegger says, it is because we are so accustomed to

[1] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §§1-2
[2] Ibid., §1a) p.1
[3] Ibid.

thinking of metaphysics, alongside logic, ethics, or epistemology, as a philosophical field of study amongst others. The illusion that metaphysics is a fixed discipline inspires the further illusion that, like the sciences, it is specific and circumscribable, and also capable of making some kind of progress.[4]

If philosophy is not to be thought of as a science, and is not capable of either certainty or progress, does this mean that it is nothing but a somewhat arbitrary method of interpreting and framing the knowledge produced by scientific disciplines? Is it, Heidegger asks, merely the 'proclamation of a worldview,' and therefore nothing other than 'the personal conviction of an individual thinker, brought into a system that drums up a few supporters for a while, who then turn around and construct their own systems? Is philosophy then like some great marketplace?'[5] Heidegger insists that this manner of questioning creates a false dichotomy. In order to facilitate a genuine understanding of metaphysics we need to break away from all comparisons with both science and worldview. Metaphysics possesses none of the epistemic security of the former and none of the cultural ephemeralness of the latter.[6] It cannot be determined comparatively using these epiphenomena, but only from within itself. In this respect, metaphysics is something foundational, something that '*stands on its own*, something *ultimate*.'[7] This bold, wholesale rejection of worldview as a basis for philosophising places Heidegger in a somewhat vulnerable position. He will have to convince us that the contents of *FCM* do not amount to 'worldview in disguise,' that his own attempt to bring us to philosophy is not comparable with the non-essential cultural psychology that he abjures. This suspicion cannot be dealt with until we have looked in more detail at the

[4] Ibid., p.2
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

conception of philosophy, and of ourselves as prospective philosophers, that Heidegger lays out in *FCM*.

Heidegger commences his examination of philosophy by arguing that the singular, 'ultimate' character of metaphysics becomes evident if we examine the etymology of the term, looking at both of its component parts: 'meta' and 'physics.' Heidegger claims that, counter to popular belief, the original sense of 'meta' does not simply mean 'after,' but rather 'going after' or 'beyond' something.[8] This 'going after' names 'whatever *turns away* from the φυσικά and *turns toward* other beings, toward beings in general and toward that being which properly is.'[9] 'Meta,' Heidegger tells us, has also often been taken to name the 'beyond' that is associated with God, or the immortal soul.[10] This double misinterpretation of the sense of 'beyond' contained in the term creates an ambiguity and hence a 'confusion' regarding the proper meaning of metaphysics.[11] Heidegger claims that if we examine the '*physika*' component, we are confronted with a similar ambivalence. *Physika* has its roots in the term *physis*, which has come to be understood as 'nature.'[12] The concept 'nature,' however, fails to capture the original meaning of *physis*, which does not name a field of objects that are amenable to scientific investigation, as if *physis* were the 'conceptual counterpart of history.'[13] The Greek conception of *physis* was far more inclusive and subtle than this. However, Heidegger claims that we cannot simply look to the Greeks for a decisive definition of *physis*, because the antiquated conception is ambiguous. *Physis*, Heidegger says, originally means not only 'that which prevails,' but also 'that which prevails in its

[8] Ibid., §11b) p.38
[9] Ibid., p.39
[10] Ibid., §12a) p.41
[11] Ibid., §12b) p.44
[12] Ibid., §8d) p.30
[13] Ibid., §8a) p.26

prevailing, or the *prevailing* of whatever prevails.'[14] In other words, *physis* designates both the beings that develop within *physis*, and also this development as such: the essence of beings (*ousia*).[15]

Heidegger's examination of the etymology of the term 'metaphysics' reinforces his claim that there is something enigmatic about metaphysics that eludes and precedes both science and worldview, comparisons which serve to 'confuse' and 'trivialise' its meaning, and do not allow the original ambiguity contained in the word to come forward.[16] Rather than determining metaphysics negatively via a comparison with other disciplines, metaphysics first needs to be confronted directly, in all its ambiguity, if we are to discover more about the nature of this enigma. It will then be possible, Heidegger claims, to see the important distinctions between it and these other fields of investigation.[17] However, this way of proceeding is problematic, for how will we know when we are confronting metaphysics directly, i.e. doing metaphysics for ourselves, if we have not yet determined what it is to the extent that we could recognise it when we apprehend it? The etymological examination revealed a profound subtlety and ambivalence to the term, but did not result in a clear definition, or lay the groundwork for a 'confrontation' with metaphysics.[18] So far, Heidegger says, no clue has been given as to how we can begin doing metaphysics, and metaphysics itself is still lost in obscurity:

> [P]hilosophy parades in the marketplace in manifold illusory forms or even disguises. One minute it looks like philosophy and is not

[14] Ibid., §8d) p.30
[15] Ibid., §9 p.33
[16] Ibid., §12a)-b)
[17] Ibid., §4 p.12
[18] Ibid., §2a) p.4

> philosophy at all, the next it looks nothing like philosophy and yet is precisely philosophy.[19]

Heidegger claims that, thus far, all attempts to define metaphysics have left us with a series of dead ends, and have obscured philosophy even further. A genuine encounter with metaphysics can only occur if we get on with *doing* metaphysics, rather than talking about it and examining it externally. Unlike scientific enquiry, however, metaphysics cannot be embarked upon *ex nihilo.* Heidegger argues that it is only when we develop our analysis *from within* a 'metaphysical questioning,' one which is already underway, that we are able to do philosophy, rather than simply talk about it.[20] The necessity of this prior embeddedness within metaphysics means that we must become 'gripped' (*ergriffen*) by metaphysical questioning in order to begin metaphysics.[21] Heidegger's claim is in fact more specific than this. The aim, he says, is not simply to recognise that we must first be 'gripped' by metaphysical questioning in order to become acquainted with metaphysics and its three fundamental concepts. Rather, we need to access the manner in which *we ourselves* are gripped by metaphysical concepts at this particular juncture in history. The challenge is not merely to apprehend world, finitude and solitude as abstract concepts that circumscribe the entire history of philosophy, but to come to know these concepts for ourselves *qua* contemporary Dasein.

It is here that Heidegger begins to present the lecture course as an invitation to philosophise. He seems to want to solicit the listener's participation in a profound and intriguing enterprise, but without yet providing any direct instruction. How are we to go about becoming 'gripped' by metaphysics in our own time? Heidegger hints that

[19] Ibid., §4 p.12
[20] Ibid., §15 p.57
[21] Ibid.

intimate knowledge of our own manner of being gripped depends first and foremost upon knowledge of the history of metaphysics as an activity, a history which thoroughly determines how things are for us now.[22] However, even if we examine the birth of metaphysics and then pursue an understanding of the operation of this 'ultimate' activity by looking at the manner in which philosophers have been 'gripped' by metaphysical questions from antiquity onwards, we still find that the 'essence' of metaphysics 'withdraws' from us.[23] Knowledge of the history of metaphysics, on its own, is not enough. In order for it to facilitate our entry into metaphysics this knowledge must be supplemented with a deep realisation that can only come from us as prospective metaphysicians. Without this realisation, knowledge of the history of metaphysics will not enable us to break the surface of metaphysics and 'do metaphysics for ourselves.' Heidegger insists that we can only reach this realisation by questioning why it is that, in our attempts to pursue a definition of metaphysics, metaphysics has thus far eluded us.

If we pursue this question we will eventually be faced with an irreducible and abstruse feature of metaphysics. We soon discover that the activity of 'turning toward' beings belonging to *physis* is a peculiarly human activity. This quite obvious fact does not appear to be especially problematic, however it belies a deeper, more complex relationship between the human and metaphysics. When we examine metaphysics more closely, we find that the human being *is* this turn towards beings, this peculiar glitch in the field of *physis* that allows for the apprehension and articulation of *physis* as a whole. This is the realisation that Heidegger wants us to reach. However, it is not immediately obvious why this fact, apparently so critical for us as prospective metaphysicians,

[22] Ibid., §1c) p.3
[23] Ibid., §2b) p.7

should mean that metaphysics '*withdraws*' from us, or why this fact should render problematic the task that Heidegger presents in *FCM*:

> [H]ow and to where can metaphysics as philosophising, as our own human activity, withdraw from us, if we ourselves are, after all, human beings?[24]

This question seems reasonable until we consider the implications of an even more fundamental question:

> Yet do we in fact know what we ourselves are? What is man?[25]

If we are to access metaphysics, and in so doing, to begin to question our own contemporary mode of doing metaphysics, we must grapple with this question. The question immediately exposes us to a deranging circularity. In order to do metaphysics, we first need to understand what a human being is. However, metaphysics itself is the discipline that is capable of formulating and addressing this fundamental question. Each field of enquiry already presupposes and incorporates the other: the question of the essence of metaphysics sits within the question of the essence of the human and vice versa. Suddenly *FCM* looks like an invitation not only to philosophise, but to come to know ourselves as the beings that philosophise, or more accurately, to realise that these activities are one and the same. When Heidegger remarks in *Being and Time* that the idea of *Lebensphilosophie* – the 'philosophy of life' – 'says about as much as the "botany of plants,"' he is getting at the foundational and inseparable co-belonging between philosophy and human existence, the fact that philosophy necessarily reflects back upon life insofar as it is a direct expression of the human being's own form of life.

[24] Ibid., §2a) p.4
[25] Ibid.

If metaphysics as an activity is conceptually coextensive with the human as the being that brings this activity about, this means that its three fundamental concepts, world, finitude and solitude, will also be inseparable from an understanding of man's being. Though a detailed comprehension of this relation between Dasein and world, finitude and solitude is not immediately provided in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, eventually Heidegger will reveal the ways in which these three concepts constitute the very fabric of Dasein *qua* metaphysical being. Prior to looking in more detail at how these concepts intersect both metaphysics and man, I want to further explore the origin of these two orientations, which are introduced in *FCM* as the core subject matters of the entire lecture course. We do not have to look too far to understand the claim that it is the human who philosophises, that it belongs to our species to enquire into its own being, and place amongst other beings. However, Heidegger is not slipping in this conception of the reciprocal relation between man and metaphysics as a convenient premise that we should accept *prima facie*. If we read his account of the meaning of metaphysics as an exercise of 'going beyond' *physis* (meta-physics), we find that this 'going beyond' *is* man's own peculiar manner of being, that it is a co-belonging that *constitutes* both man and metaphysics rather simply being a relation between them.

The genesis of metaphysics: The human's peculiar relationship to **physis**

Though Heidegger has not yet provided any succinct instruction concerning how we go about 'becoming gripped' by metaphysics, by framing our prospective encounter with metaphysics as a process of becoming gripped he has implicitly revealed what he considers to be the most important feature of the 'co-belonging' between us as human beings and metaphysics. Heidegger claims that it would not be necessary for us to become gripped at all, were it the case that we are already held fast to what we are

attempting to comprehend.[26] The fact that metaphysics is a process of striking out beyond *physis* presupposes that the position of the human, *qua* metaphysical being, is not fixed within *physis*. We are thus beginning to discover something about ourselves as the beings that are predisposed towards metaphysics.

Heidegger clarifies this idea that the human's position within *physis* is somehow unhinged through a closer examination of the concept of *physis* itself. His claim that *physis* cannot be defined as the 'conceptual counterpart of history' not only provides an important clue to the deep ambiguity of the original concept of *physis*, but also hints at the direct and profound way in which the human is implicated in the activity of metaphysics. The definition of *physis* as a correlate of history is inappropriate, Heidegger says, because *physis* does not simply name the domain of animals and plants, but also 'irrupts in the primal experience of man.'[27] Man, like other living beings, belongs to *physis.* However, though man is part of *physis*, 'entwined' within it just as primordially as all other living beings, he has a deviant relationship to *physis* in the sense that, as the being who partakes in the *logos*, he has always already 'spoken out' about *physis* from within it:

> In Greek, speaking is called λέγειν; the prevailing that has been spoken out is the λόγος. Therefore – it is important here to note this from the outset, as we shall see more precisely from the evidence – it belongs to the essence of prevailing beings, insofar as man exists among them, that they are spoken out in some way. If we conceive of this state of affairs in an elementary and originary way, we see that what is spoken out is already necessarily within φύσις, otherwise it could not be spoken from out of it. To φύσις, to the prevailing of beings as a whole, there belongs this λόγος.[28]

[26] Ibid., §2b) p.7
[27] Ibid., §8a) p.25
[28] Ibid., §8b) p.26

Here we see that the examination of the ambiguity of the term *physis* turns naturally towards an examination of the ambiguity of the human and its relationship to *physis*. The human embodies a peculiar ambivalence to the extent that it is both part of *physis*, and capable of 'speaking out' about *physis* in the *logos*. Heidegger argues that when we consider the original meaning of *physis* and its relation to the human, we discover a mysterious state of balance between the human on the one hand, and the beings in *physis* that the human speaks out about on the other. Heidegger has claimed that the human is the articulator of beings, but *logos* is described in the above passage as part of the fabric of *physis*, something that belongs, first and foremost, to *physis* rather than man. It is therefore not simply the case that man uses his faculties to articulate *physis* from a position of detachment; rather the beings belonging to *physis* incorporate a drive towards articulation 'insofar as man exists amongst them.' Heidegger punctuates *FCM* with explorations of this enigmatic idea. His aim in these introductory passages is to kick start these explorations by registering the profound ambiguity of the Greek conception of man's position and role in *physis*, and to argue that the investigation into metaphysics has landed at the shores of this tension.

Heidegger claims that according to this ancient, ambiguous understanding, man is tied into the realm of *physis* in a dual sense. Man's own form of life is such that he 'exists among' natural beings, and he is also the being that, via his participation in the *logos*, is the medium through which *physis* is given expression. Like all beings, man embodies a drive towards articulation. However, Heidegger claims that it is only within man — the articulator of beings – that we find an internal struggle. Though man's relationship to *physis* appears, at first glance, to amount to a peculiar detachment and freedom from the natural terrain that encapsulates all other beings, it is also one that subjects man to a dissonant existence: though man is the being that is able to somehow 'go beyond'

physis, a going-beyond which enables him to do metaphysics, insofar as he exists amongst those beings about which he speaks out, he will never be able to complete this exercise. This is because he is part of the very totality that he attempts to disclose, and he will thus never be able to detach from *physis* in order to attain an elevated, de-situated perspective that can capture everything belonging to it.

This peculiar status of man within *physis* provides some explanation as to why man would need to 'become gripped' in order to do metaphysics, i.e. to undergo a direct examination of *physis* from within his own position, his own extendedness beyond *physis*. Man is *essentially* not gripped, not held fast to *physis*. This need to be 'gripped' ultimately pertains to a distinction that runs throughout *FCM*, and has already been introduced via Heidegger's discussion of the original Greek conception of the two poles of *physis*. According to this ancient understanding, *physis* names not only beings that 'prevail,' but also the 'prevailing' of these beings. This amounts to a distinction between the plethora of beings that exist, and the *being* of these beings. Heidegger phrases this difference respectively as 'beings as a whole' versus 'beings as such.' Dasein, Heidegger has said, is the only being that 'speaks out of the whole and into it,' i.e. not only is it part of the whole, one amongst the beings that exist, it is also capable of speaking *into* the domain of beings, of determining, via the *logos*, what these beings 'are' 'as such.'[29] Dasein, Heidegger says, cannot 'stick to beings,' cannot 'get by without being,' without 'essence,' because it finds itself unhinged from the domain of beings; it represents a peculiar schism in the field of *physis* insofar as it is capable of detaching from *physis* in order to attempt to take in 'the whole.'[30] This detachment and estrangement from the domain of beings as a whole means that Dasein must 'grip' onto

[29] Ibid., §75 p.353
[30] Ibid., p.355

beings. Following the meaning of the German *begreifen*, this 'gripping' amounts to conceptualising or understanding beings rather than simply receiving them passively. Heidegger describes this primordial detachment, which impels Dasein to access 'being' as well as 'beings,' as 'homesickness,' a condition which he describes, following the Romantic poet Novalis, as the requisite of all philosophising, i.e. the process of man's becoming 'gripped.'

From within the dead ends and failed attempts to isolate a succinct definition of metaphysics, we are thus provided with something more philosophically potent than a straightforward definition: an understanding of the complex interplay between man, *physis* and *logos* that first enables all of our previous attempts. Though the 'speaking out' that characterises man appears to grant him a superior position, it also consigns him to an endless, insatiable struggle. The relationship between *logos* and *physis* expresses this struggle: the Greek sense of the *logos*, as that exercise of uncovering through which beings are revealed, implies that beings are first and foremost concealed. The 'coming to word' (λέγειν) of *physis* in Greek thought first depends upon the opposite concept: κρύπτειν, to hide or cover.[31] *Physis*, then, is primarily self-concealing. This concealment, Heidegger says, is implied in the negative *a-* prefix in the Greek *aletheia*, which, like the German '*un-*,' signifies the absence of something:

> It expresses the fact that something is lacking in the word it prefixes. In truth beings are torn from concealment. Truth is understood by the Greeks as something stolen, something that must be torn from concealment in a confrontation in which precisely φύσις strives to conceal itself.[32]

The fact that the prevailing belonging to *physis* must be wrested from concealment indicates that it is intrinsically self-concealing. This self-concealing tendency of *physis*

[31] Ibid., §8b) p.27
[32] Ibid., §8c) p.29

is described in a sentence from Heraclitus' famous and yet, Heidegger says, to this day still incomprehensible fragment: 'The prevailing of things [*physis*] has in itself a striving to conceal itself.'[33] This sentence, for Heidegger, indicates the 'innermost connection' between *physis* and concealment.[34] However, Heidegger has also claimed that *logos* is an operation that belongs to *physis*; it is not a 'component' of man.[35] Beings, as Heraclitus says, embody a drive towards concealment, but this very drive presupposes and is directed towards the possibility of unconcealment. Heidegger argues that beings make themselves amenable to unconcealment; 'insofar as man exists among them,' they seek out expression through man's articulation of them.[36] There is therefore an ambiguous parallel between the human and the nonhuman case. Man incorporates a drive to unconceal, and beings incorporate a drive for unconcealment that is manifested, first and foremost, as withdrawal and concealment. Beings can only be pursued insofar as they try to hide; their self-hiding is ultimately an invitation to be removed from concealment. As the being that initiates this unconcealment, the human is exemplary of *physis* as a whole, since it brings this ambiguous dynamic of concealment and unconcealment to the surface. Moreover, the human's own form of *physis*, like all aspects of *physis*, is part of the dynamic of concealment. Insofar as they belong to *physis*, all of the human's activities, including metaphysics, tend towards concealment. Heidegger insists that if we are to understand metaphysics, and the portion of *physis* that is occupied by the human, we must negotiate this elusive disposition shared by *physis*, metaphysics, and the human.

[33] Ibid., §8b) p.27
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., p.26
[36] Ibid.

Heidegger's analysis has revealed a broad and nebulous definition of *physis* as an all-encompassing concept that envelops man, but that is at the same time self-concealing and unattainable. The unattainability of *physis* for man stems firstly from the fact that man is restricted to 'speaking' out about *physis* from within *physis*, and secondly from the connection between truth and a kind of negativity, indicated in the *a*-prefix of *aletheia*. Far from being grounded in the clarity of logical proof, truth represents a profound conflict. Heidegger's language even hints at a certain kind of violence: beings must be 'torn' from concealment.[37] Aletheic truth is strife-like because *physis* is self-concealing, meaning that entities must be wrested into appearance via the *logos* and are not simply given. Truth, Heidegger says, is 'something stolen.'[38]

This conception of man's relationship to *physis* complicates the traditional idea that metaphysics, as the activity of 'going beyond' the '*physika*,' is a 'fixed discipline' amongst other disciplines, and therefore occupies the same status as science or worldview.[39] All other fields of enquiry are parasitic upon this fundamental activity of speaking out of *physis* about *physis* via the *logos*, and in this sense, Heidegger says, metaphysics, as the ultimate expression of this speaking out, is something 'ultimate,' something that '*stands on its own*.'[40] Man is the only being that takes part in the activity of the *logos*, and is therefore the only being that does metaphysics. This could be interpreted as an advantage, however, Heidegger insists that this connection to the *logos* arises as a result of an essential negativity in man, a 'rupturing' in his very being. This means that man cannot passively apprehend the beings that belong to *physis*, but must strive to create a world of meaning from these beings, one in which they become

[37] Ibid., p.27
[38] Ibid., §8c) p.29
[39] Ibid., §1a) p.1
[40] Ibid., p.2

coherent in specific ways, a world in which they show up both 'as a whole' and 'as such.'

Metaphysics is therefore envisaged as the offspring of a kind of constitutive brokenness in man. Heidegger enters into a distinctly Romantic register as he explores this observation through an analysis of a fragment from Novalis: 'Philosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere.'[41] This idea of philosophy as the outcome of a deficit in man, i.e. an absence of home, challenges the concept of philosophising as a form of elevated contemplation, envisaging it not as 'some blissful awe,' but as 'the struggle against the insurmountable ambiguity of all questioning and being.'[42] Philosophy is understood here as the outcome of a 'rupture' within Dasein, an intractable negativity that is part of the very fabric of Dasein. Novalis's use in his fragment of the term *Trieb* rather than *Sehnsucht* captures this conception of philosophy as a visceral urge rather than the apotheosis of human activity.

Heidegger describes the manifestation of this negativity in two ways. Firstly, Dasein, as a finite being, is from its very inception exposed to the constant possibility of the imminent negation of its existence. Exposure to the fact of this finitude, Heidegger says, means that man 'is that inability to remain and is yet unable to leave his place […] the Da-sein in him constantly *throws* him into possibilities and thereby keeps him *subjected* to what is actual.'[43] Secondly, this negativity is expressed in the inevitable struggle pertaining to the fact that 'insofar as he exists,' man 'has always already spoken out about φύσις, about the prevailing whole to which he himself belongs.'[44] Dasein is the conduit through which all metaphysics occurs, but as one amongst the beings towards

[41] Ibid., §2) p.5
[42] Ibid., §7 p.21
[43] Ibid., §76 p.365
[44] Ibid., §8b) p.26

which it is open, Dasein will never be able to reach the stance of a 'view from nowhere' and encapsulate these beings as a totality. This dubious status as both the object and instrument of metaphysics means that there is something inherently unstable and insatiable about man's capacity to 'speak out' about beings.

If his relationship to world were something stable, man would not have to make an effort to render it accessible; he would not experience an 'urge' for philosophising. This account of Heidegger's creates a somewhat impoverished image of human existence. The elevated task of metaphysics, it transpires, is rooted in a structural lack pertaining to man's essence. If it were not for this lack, this detachment from *physis*, there would be no need to 'gain a grip' on entities. There would thus be no metaphysics. And yet metaphysics is not itself capable of drawing man out of his predicament, but instead involves encountering this predicament directly and enduring it.

The two orientations of the concepts of world, finitude and individuation

From within this analysis of man and his peculiar position in *physis*, the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics begin to take shape. The primordial relationship between man and *physis*, the fact that man has always already 'spoken out' about *physis*, implies that, to the extent that man exists, he is always engaged with beings as a whole, and with beings as such. Man is, Heidegger says, 'always waiting for something,' always 'called upon by something as a whole. This 'as a whole' is the world.'[45] Human existence therefore takes place from within a kind of lacuna in which striving for world is an on-going project, something that is felt as a profound need but, to the extent that *physis* is self-concealing, is never simply attained. Man's whole being is structured in such a way that he reaches out towards world:

[45] Ibid., §2b) p.5

> We are underway to this 'as a whole.' We ourselves are this underway, this transition, this 'neither the one nor the other.'[46]

Man does not simply 'have world' nor is he simply deprived of it. The idea that man is a 'transition,' a movement on the way to world that is impelled by the felt absence of world, implies that there is a lack built into the structure of the human being, a lack that is not suffered by other beings. The notion that man is 'neither the one nor the other' suggests that there is something incomplete about him. The fact that, in his very being, man is the site of a reaching out towards world, such that all of man's activities take place through or alongside this overwhelming urge, is what gives world the status of a fundamental concept of metaphysics. Heidegger describes the 'transition' that constitutes man's existence as 'finitude:'

> What is this oscillating to and fro between neither/ nor? Not the one and likewise not the other, this 'indeed, and yet not, and yet indeed.' What is the unrest of this 'not'? We name it *finitude*.[47]

Finitude, the second fundamental concept of metaphysics, is not an attribute of man, but rather his '*fundamental way of being*.'[48] Insofar as man exists, he is finite. In realising and acting in accordance with his finitude, Heidegger says, man comes into his genuine essence. If we wish to achieve our highest potential as human beings, 'we cannot abandon this finitude or deceive ourselves about it, but must safeguard it. Such preservation is the innermost process of our being finite.'[49] It is this becoming finite that ultimately 'individuates' every Dasein. Individuation, the third fundamental concept of metaphysics, does not refer to the self-assertion of man's individual ego. Rather it names 'that *solitariness* in which each human being first of all enters into a

[46] Ibid., p.6
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

nearness to what is essential to all things, a nearness to world.'[50] This 'solitariness,' for Heidegger, is to be understood as the originary 'homesickness' that results in Dasein's detachment from the domain of *physis*, whereas finitude, the most foundational of the three concepts, names this detachment itself.

These three fundamental concepts of metaphysics are explained, first and foremost, in terms of their primordial occurrence within man. As well as being fundamental concepts of metaphysics, they are fundamental concepts of man, yet ones that elude and precede all scientific, anthropological or psychological determinations of man. The question of what metaphysics is thus remains a question about who man is, since the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics are only activated in and through man:

> What is all this, taken together: world, finitude, individuation? What is happening to us here? What is man, that such things happen to him in his very ground?[51]

What does the essence of man, the site of the occurrence of world, finitude and solitude, consist in? We can now grasp more clearly Heidegger's proposition that man's existence is constituted by a rupturing in *physis*. According to this view finitude *is* our very existence, our own participation in *physis*. This existence is essentially a negativity: we are within *physis* only insofar as we are separated from it. This being part of *physis* whilst being apart from it forms the basis of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics; it is the essence of all metaphysics. This proposition seems, from the perspective of a more contemporary standpoint, a somewhat obscure way of characterising man's being. In modern metaphysics, Heidegger says, man's status as a knowing subject is presupposed, not exposed and interrogated.[52] All problems of

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., §14 p.55

metaphysics now come 'under the aspect of a new science, which is represented by *mathematical natural science*.'[53] Contemporary scientific man, with his arsenal of empirical knowledge and techniques, is envisaged as a problem solver, not a problem. And yet Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal* argues that a proper engagement with metaphysics means prising open the problem of man. Heidegger insists that in order to initiate this process in our own time we must try to understand and circumnavigate the more superficial conceptions of man and metaphysics that characterise the contemporary epoch.

The historical concealment of the more primordial conceptions of man and metaphysics

Because the question of who man is along with all knowledge of the co-belonging between man and metaphysics has been covered over, the principle task of *FCM* will be especially laborious. In order to begin to do metaphysics proper, which, Heidegger claims, means discovering for ourselves the ancient relationship that man has to *physis* and the two orientations of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics, we need to excavate the various layers of development that have occurred in the history of metaphysics; we must attempt to retrieve metaphysics from its characteristic self-concealment. In so doing we can come to understand our 'contemporary situation' and reacquaint ourselves with philosophy from within it.[54]

Heidegger begins his analysis through an enquiry into ancient philosophy and observes that the Greeks existed in an enlightened awareness of the 'perilous,' interminable incompleteness of the human's existence, its homesickness, its compulsion to 'tear' beings from concealment, its inability to immerse itself within the 'whole' and be an

[53] Ibid., p.54
[54] Ibid., §18a) p.69

undifferentiated entity amongst other entities.[55] Heidegger claims that, in Aristotle's First Philosophy, the two poles of *physis* – beings as such and beings as a whole – were understood as two interrelated dimensions of *physis*, with man understood as a being that unites these two poles in the activity of philosophising:

> There are not two different disciplines; rather [Aristotle] designates questioning concerning beings as a whole and questioning concerning what the being of beings, their essence, their nature is, as […] First Philosophy.[56]

Ancient philosophy thus meets its 'acme' with Aristotle, but Heidegger claims that it has since been in a state of decline.[57] This original awareness of the two poles of *physis*, and of philosophy as the nexus between *physis* and the human – the activity that takes in beings as such and as a whole – begins to break down. Heidegger claims that this is principally because metaphysics is no longer understood in terms of the philosophical import of its component terms: *meta* and *physika*. Heidegger argues that, from the birth of Plato's Academy onwards, the concept of 'metaphysics' has been subjected to a damaging 'scholastic splitting,' wherein the field of *physis* is broken up and regionalised. Rather than man being depicted as a vehicle for the expression of *physis*, one that is embedded in *physis*, man and *physis* come to be interpreted as distinct regions of beings. In addition, *physis* comes to be understood as a term denoting 'the living,' i.e. as a term for 'nature' as an object of study in the modern scientific sense.[58] Heidegger claims that this reductionist revision of the meaning of *physis* wrongly interprets 'prevailing' (*walten*) as 'growth.'[59] According to Heidegger, the former term, which is linked to the Latin *valere*, 'to be strong,' captures more accurately the original

[55] Ibid., §6b) β) p.19
[56] Ibid., §9 p.33
[57] Ibid., §10 p.35
[58] Ibid., §8a) p.25
[59] Ibid.

Greek conception of those beings that are included in *physis*. We now tend to reserve the term 'growth' for animals and plants – 'organisms' in general – but its ancient usage included *all* beings and processes that are sustained within the fundamental dynamic of *physis*:

> We here take growth and growing […] in the quite elementary and broad sense in which it irrupts in the primal experience of man: growth not only of plants and animals, their arising and passing away taken merely as an isolated process, but growth as this occurring in the midst of, and permeated by, the changing of the seasons, in the midst of the alteration of day and night, in the midst of the wandering of the stars, of storms and weather and the raging of the elements. Growing is all this taken together as one.[60]

This broad understanding, according to Heidegger, encapsulates all beings that sustain themselves, that manage to embody the endurance contained in the term *walten*. The modern, organismic sense of 'growth' is incapable of capturing this more essential meaning.

Heidegger claims that in Plato's Academy, not only is the term *physis* reduced to 'the living,' to an object for scientific investigation, another whole region of beings that was once understood as belonging to *physis* now comes to be divorced from it. This separation occurs with the construction of a field of entities that is seen in opposition to 'living' beings: that of ἦθος, *ēthos*. This term 'comprises everything referring to human deed and action, including man and his activity.'[61] *Ēthos*, Heidegger says, means 'man's stance, the stance taken by man, in his self-conduct as a being who is distinct from nature in the narrower sense, from *physis*.'[62] A decisive distinction thus emerges between what has come to be understood as the domain of 'natural' beings as opposed to man and all that is associated with him. This initial division, Heidegger says, marks

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., §10 p.35
[62] Ibid., p.36

the start of a movement towards the classification and systematisation of thought, a trend in which 'genuine questioning' begins to decline.[63] Though this systematic, regularised and regularising approach to thinking cannot, Heidegger claims, be located in Plato's writings, it is the outcome of the attempt to establish philosophical schools:

> What effect does [the formation of schools] have? Living questioning dies out. The proper grip that held philosophical questioning is absent. And this is all the more so since what once meant being gripped in this way has come to be something known and has been spoken out.[64]

The successors of Greek philosophy have, throughout the ages, situated their questions within particular areas of a general schema of philosophical thinking, concentrating on specific problems and producing tenets of philosophical understanding that can be applied to numerous situations.[65] Heidegger claims that this type of thinking, which is directed towards a pragmatic articulation of beings, is divorced from the originary 'grip' that was the genesis of Greek philosophical questioning:

> What has been spoken out is taken on its own and made into a useful result, something that can be applied, something for everyone to learn and repeat. That means that everything belonging to Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, the wealth of treatises and dialogues that has been handed down, is uprooted and is no longer comprehended as something rooted.[66]

The subsequent history of philosophy is a process of further divisions and subdivisions, which continue to mobilise the *physis*-*ēthos* distinction in increasingly unthinking ways. We are left with multiple sub-disciplines, all of which have carved themselves from the fields of *physis* and *ēthos* in the belief that these terms mark discernible, distinct categories of beings. Philosophical questions are thereby localised, confined to

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p.35
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

problems that are treated from within their own category of the schema, and according to their own specified principles and methodologies. These questions are 'dealt with' according to the individual discipline's 'methodological schema of question and proof.'[67] They are formulated from out of the problems themselves, and, though they produce communicable results, they encompass none of the 'enrootedness' of the questions originally posed by the Greeks.[68]

The separation of the dimension of man's way of being from the being of *physis* triggers a reduction, generalisation and simplification of philosophical questioning:

> [B]ecause the enrootedness of […] philosophising has been lost, the school and those who come after are left with the task of somehow stitching together the divergent elements which are now splitting apart, with the result that philosophy comes to be accessible for everyone and can be repeated by everyone. Everything that had once grown out of the most diverse questions – extrinsically unconnected, but all the more instrinsically rooted – now becomes rootless, heaped together in subjects according to viewpoints that can be taught and learned. The context and its rootedness are replaced by an ordering within subjects and scholastic disciplines. The question is which viewpoints now regulate the ordering of this rich material, which is no longer taken hold of at its core or in its vitality.[69]

Whereas the Greeks 'lived' the peculiar relation between man and *physis*, the subsequent history of philosophy has produced a tendency towards subject-centred calculation and representation, with the anodyne result that man is no longer compelled to confront himself directly. It is for this reason that, according to Heidegger, we tend to isolate the 'philosophy of life' as a subdivision of philosophy, without recognising, as the Greeks did, that philosophy always originates in and directs itself towards life.

[67] Ibid., p.37
[68] Ibid., p.35
[69] Ibid.

Using these reflections as a propaedeutic for comprehending the contemporary manner in which man is 'gripped'

Heidegger argues that this process of increasing specialisation based around 'uprooted' concepts reaches radical heights in the contemporary age. Armed with ever increasing amounts of information about man's various properties, which are provided by the multiple disciplines that deal with different aspects of human life, we are nonetheless unable to confront the question of what a human being is 'essentially.' In his 1929 lecture course *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger remarks that no era has 'known so much and such a variety of things about the human being as the present era,' and yet at the same time, 'no era has known less concerning what the human being is than the present era.'[70] The relation that man has to 'nature' is explained away rather than questioned by the sciences, and the original complexity of that relation – the fact that it is really a profound co-belonging – is never brought to light. This is because, as Beistegui says, modern man is condemned to 'face the world' from within an already determined, fixed conception of who he is, one that cannot be brought to light and questioned from within his fragmented, calculative structures of thinking:

> Greek man encountered nature as φύσις, or as birth to presence, and medieval man experienced nature as permeated by the eternal presence of god. Modern man, however, in facing the world as that which faces him from out of his capacity to represent it, encounters only himself.[71]

The problem that arises in the contemporary epoch, according to Heidegger, is that this encounter does not take place from within an attitude of metaphysical questioning. Because the increasingly specialised information that man possesses about himself is free-floating, detached from its conceptual origins, man encounters himself only

[70] Heidegger, M. (1990) *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* trans. by Taft, R. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press p.203
[71] Beistegui, M. (2003) *Thinking with Heidegger* p.94

‘externally,’ piecing together particles of knowledge concerning matters such as his organic form, his cognitive capacities, his sociality, his technological accomplishments, his moral character etc. These themes are made up of the residue of the *physis-ēthos* division, which is itself parasitic upon the ancient conception of man as a peculiar opening within *physis*. The ‘contemporary situation,’ then, from within which Heidegger is addressing us in the lecture course, is littered with the debris of a non-essential division between ‘man’ and nature understood as ‘the living,’ a division that has been encircling Western thought since the establishment of Plato’s Academy. This realisation finally provides clues concerning the contemporary way in which Dasein is ‘gripped.’ Heidegger argues that the historical estrangement from any real confrontation with what the human is culminates in a sense of deep ennui, in which we catch a glimpse of the superficiality of the concepts on which we rely, concepts that attempt to assert themselves in the wake of an increasingly remote understanding of the distinction between the human and life.

Heidegger argues that the contemporary situation is one in which the effort to retain a ‘grip’ on entities has become burdensome and laborious. The volume of detailed information we have at our disposal is not enough; we have, Heidegger claims, become bored with ourselves. If we are to take up Heidegger’s invitation, in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, to enter into an engagement with philosophy, we must seek to understand this ennui, this peculiarly contemporary boredom, and the manner in which it could potentially corrupt our path to a more originary understanding of the human, its standing within *physis*, and its propensity to do metaphysics. Understanding this boredom with ourselves is therefore the next task in the journey into metaphysics.

Chapter Three: The role of 'fundamental attunement' in *FCM*

The problem of where and how to begin metaphysics

The previous chapter began to expound Heidegger's description, in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, of the activity of metaphysics as a primordial occurrence that is ineluctably tied to man's being. Due to this 'co-belonging' between man and metaphysics, it is not possible to treat metaphysics as if it were on a par with either science or worldview. Heidegger claims that unlike these other, derivative fields of enquiry, metaphysics is not an activity that we can one day decide to begin. We need, Heidegger says, to strongly resist the conception of metaphysics that we have inherited, a conception that is set firmly within the confines of convenient but non-essential scholastic stratifications that serve to inhibit rather than facilitate an understanding of what metaphysics is essentially. If we can bear to resist the seductive sense of organisation and productivity that comes with disciplinary delineation and stratification, and open ourselves up to the possibility that metaphysics, as the essence of the activity of philosophy, is something constitutively human, something pertaining to the very structure of human existence, we can begin to acquaint ourselves with this ancient activity. In other words, we can begin to take up the 'invitation to philosophise' that Heidegger presents in the *Preliminary Appraisal* and re-establish an understanding of ourselves as continually and inalienably involved in an exercise of 'speaking out' of *physis*.

Unlike this ancient, peculiarly and essentially human activity, the disciplines that stem from science and worldview have already presupposed answers to the questions that they pose. Becoming acquainted with philosophy demands that we recognise the fact that neither mathematical proofs nor common sense thinking can diminish its intrinsic

ambiguity, an ambiguity that, according to Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal*, arises in us *qua* human beings. We must, Heidegger tells us, think philosophically *about* philosophy, rather than approach philosophy from the perspective of external disciplines. In other words, we must turn our examination inward towards our own philosophical disposition, rather than treat philosophy as an activity that does not already implicate us directly. This need to turn our attention towards ourselves as prospective philosophers is summarised by Heidegger's claim that our examination of philosophy must be a 'living' examination.[1] Heidegger wishes us to come to understand, more intimately, and in a more autobiographically astute manner, the activity through which we 'speak out' about *physis*, and the way in which this activity serves as a requisite for all metaphysics. He wishes us to grasp the fact that metaphysics is an activity in which our very existence is at stake, and that we cannot therefore displace ourselves from the centre of the enquiry. This impossibility of setting metaphysics aside in order to examine it 'externally' results in a 'perilous' ambiguity and circularity.[2] However, Heidegger insists that any confusion that presents itself must be endured, or rather 'lived' if one is to *really* begin to do metaphysics proper:

> In the attempt to deal with philosophy itself we have become victims of an ambiguity. Although we have spoken *of* philosophy, we have not yet spoken *from out of it*. We have indeed dealt *with* philosophy, but not taken action *within* philosophy itself.[3]

This idea, that we can only come to know the activity of philosophy – the love of wisdom – by first becoming 'victims' of its vertiginous ambiguity and our own incapacity to eliminate this ambiguity, is highly significant. On the one hand, the idea seems to resonate with the Christian message that part of the practise of receiving God's

[1] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §15 p.57
[2] Ibid., §6b) β) p.19
[3] Ibid., §15 p.57

love is that we acknowledge the flaws embodied in our sinful, terrestrial ways. However, for Heidegger the encircling ambiguity from within which we encounter philosophy is not a 'fault' on the part of man; rather it belongs to metaphysics essentially as a 'positive characteristic.'[4] Heidegger's point is not that we ought to begin by facing up to our intrinsic failure as human beings to establish, with certainty, the essence of the activity of philosophy, in order that we can then go on to witness this essence with great clarity. Rather his point is that the entire enquiry from beginning to end will be saturated with ambiguity, insofar as metaphysics *is* an ambiguous activity, one that we are involved with essentially as human beings, and that our task is to pay attention to our involvement in this ambiguity by 'living' it, i.e. by engaging in what Heidegger terms an 'actual living philosophising.'[5]

The idea that we can only bring about this process of genuine philosophical questioning by becoming 'victims of ambiguity' may lead us to believe that metaphysics is a hopelessly elusive, ineluctable activity. Heidegger insists, however, that the presence of ambiguity and circularity is not a sign that the philosophical path of enquiry is defunct. If one's reaction to circularity is to abandon the enquiry in favour of one that has a greater likelihood of producing certainty, then this is a sign that they have not taken up the 'extreme demand' of Heidegger's invitation to philosophise:

> This circling movement of philosophy is of course alien to ordinary understanding which only ever wants to get the job in hand over and done with as quickly as possible. But going round in circles gets us nowhere. Above all, it makes us feel dizzy, and dizziness is something uncanny. We feel as though we are suspended in the Nothing. Therefore there must be no such circling and thus no circle in philosophy! This is, after all, a universal principle of logic. That is why all scientific philosophy prides itself on getting by without this circle. Yet anyone who has never been seized by dizziness in the presence of a philosophical question has never asked the question in a

[4] Ibid., Introduction to Chapter Two p.10
[5] Ibid.,§15 p.57

> philosophical way, that is, has never entered the circle in the first place.[6]

Heidegger claims that from the perspective of 'ordinary understanding,' which always needs to work with what is immediately apparent to it, and progress 'in a straight line,' and is therefore ideally adapted to the clear divisions drawn in disciplinary fragmentation, this circling motion is simply a 'movement around the periphery,' one that ultimately fails because it is unclear how any progress could be made.[7] For ordinary understanding, circularity is 'a sign of impossibility.'[8] It is not the case that every instance of circular thinking is an instance of philosophising, but the failure on the part of ordinary understanding to entertain circularity amounts to a refusal to encounter metaphysics directly, and simultaneously to encounter man directly. Ordinary understanding thus 'misses the decisive issue here, which is an insight into the *centre* of the circle as such, an insight made possible in such a circling movement and in this alone. For the centre only manifests itself as such as we circle around it. And this is why every attempt to argue away such circularity in philosophy only leads us away from philosophy itself. Likewise every objection which argues that our examination is circular already demonstrates that it is not a philosophical objection at all and is consequently quite vacuous as far as philosophy is concerned.'[9] The 'invitation to philosophise' presented in the *Preliminary Appraisal* is an invitation into this circling movement of philosophy, a movement that naturally occurs, according to Heidegger, when we commit ourselves to 'living' philosophical questions, and to coming to

[6] Ibid., §43 p.180
[7] Ibid., §45a) p.187; §43 p.180
[8] Ibid., §45a) p.187
[9] Ibid., §43 p.180

understand this ancient activity 'internally,' which, Heidegger argues, is really the only way to understand it.[10]

At this point in the lecture course the path ahead is far from clear. Unable to rely on the succinct calculations of logic, and having been asked to abandon ourselves to the idea that the essence of philosophy is shrouded in an ambiguity that we cannot circumnavigate, we are likely to object that, having been invited to embark upon a philosophical journey, we now feel somewhat lost and neglected. Far from providing any reassurance in response to such an objection, Heidegger retreats behind the Heraclitean principle that 'the prevailing of things [*physis*] has in itself a striving to conceal itself,' and that philosophy, as the activity of uncovering beings as what they are, will necessarily have to negotiate their self-concealing tendency.[11] The recipient of Heidegger's invitation is indeed lost, faced with the notion that 'certainty' is to be understood as a kind of nostrum designed to insulate us from the dangerous ambiguity of philosophy and our relationship to it, with 'truth' being described as something 'stolen' and strife-like.

In the face of this sense of being lost, Heidegger does take steps to illuminate a path for us. Rather than abandoning ourselves to the hopelessness of the situation, we can at least, Heidegger tells us, garner an attitude of attentiveness, of 'wakefulness.'[12] We can at least try to be ready to encounter philosophy. First and foremost we need, Heidegger says, to 'awaken' such a readiness for philosophising. We can only 'properly undertake' genuinely philosophical questioning when we begin to awaken what Heidegger terms a 'fundamental attunement of our philosophising.'[13] Heidegger claims that this

[10] Ibid., §15 p.57
[11] Ibid., §8b) p.27
[12] Ibid., §19 p.79
[13] Ibid., §15 p.57

awakening is 'the first and proper fundamental task of this lecture course and the beginning of an actual living philosophising.'[14]

Introducing the idea of a 'fundamental attunement'

Just as, if one is lost in the woods and has been going round in circles, one ought to try to pay close attention to the environment, to sounds and signals of potential obstructions or dangers as well as signs of a way forward, Heidegger claims that we must begin by ensuring that we remain attentive, that we have managed to gain a 'grip' on entities and that we are therefore 'attuned' in the face of the 'turbulence' of philosophising.[15] This attentiveness, for Heidegger, is not to be understood as a way of ameliorating the tenuousness of our situation. Rather it is an attitude that emerges *in* our being lost, in the intrinsic ambiguity that he takes to be the reserve of philosophising. Unlike those studying courses in science, Heidegger says, those who are studying metaphysics will have established less and less firm ground each day: 'each hour we make less progress and have instead increasingly approached a standstill. Not only that, but we have perhaps worn through the ground we were standing on to begin with, we have perhaps reached a place that is groundless, and begun to float, entered an *attunement*,' and perhaps not even an actual attunement, but a basic 'receptivity' for an attunement.[16]

Heidegger considers this desolation in which Dasein finds itself lost to be the starting point of all metaphysics, because it constitutes the conditions in which we abandon our efforts to negate the 'encircling' ambiguity of philosophy, the point at which we give ourselves over to the dizziness that it engenders, and at the same time recognise the potential contained in this dizziness. It is at this point of simultaneous resignation and

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., §6b) β) p.19
[16] Ibid., §37 p.160

awareness that a receptivity for philosophising is forged. According to Heidegger it is here, with this attitude, this awareness of being lost, rather than with the detached certainty that arises from mathematical verification, that philosophy begins. It is this principle that Heidegger indicates when he claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that homesickness, in the Novalisian sense, is the 'fundamental attunement of all philosophising,' the basic apprehension of our being lost that originally subjects us to a mode of attunement.[17] Experiencing this absence of stability motivates all of our attempts to seek out or create stability for ourselves. It is in this sense that homesickness functions as a kind of *Ur*-attunement; the most basic thing we can say of philosophy is that it *is* homesickness, 'an urge to be at home everywhere.'[18] Understood in this way, philosophising is the result of a negativity, an insecurity, the absence of something; it is the very opposite of certainty, 'comfort' and 'assurance.'[19] This idea beautifully captures the manner in which man is implicated in metaphysics as the locus of a 'speaking out' about *physis*, the idea that man *is* metaphysics insofar as he is the being that embodies this primordial homesickness, this fundamental susceptibility to an attunement. The idea also emphasises Heidegger's characterisation of homesickness, and of the attunements that develop from it, as aspects of the optic through which metaphysics occurs, and not as ephemeral psychical events. Homesickness in Novalis's sense is not something cognitive; it is not a feeling or emotion, rather it is a fundamental 'urge' (*Trieb*) for reconciliation with something lost. This homesickness, which, according to Heidegger, circumscribes all philosophising and the domain of the human generally, is captured in the following reflection by Bertrand Russell in one of his letters:

[17] Ibid., §2b) p.5
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., §6b) β) p.19

> The centre of me is always and eternally a terrible pain – a curious wild pain – a searching for something beyond what the world contains, something transfigured and infinite – the beatific vision – God – I do not find it, I do not think it is to be found – but the love of it is my life – it's like passionate love for a ghost. At times it fills me with rage, at times with wild despair, it is the source of gentleness and cruelty and work, it fills every passion that I have – it is the actual spring of life within me.[20]

This passage resonates with the relation drawn by Heidegger between historically contingent attunements and the far deeper, primordial '*Ur*-attunement' of homesickness. A plethora of other, more 'localised' moods will arise, but each is always a configuration of the basic 'urge' of Novalisian homesickness. Just as Russell describes his painful longing for an immutable truth, a God that he believes cannot be found, as *itself* a kind of vital force, the 'spring of life' within him, homesickness, in Heidegger's view, is the agent that sets all philosophical attunements in motion. And just as Russell describes his longing as directly responsible for other, often conflicting impulses and feelings, homesickness, in the sense that Heidegger describes it, is the ultimate foundation of all other ostensibly far more superficial moods.

The implication of this idea, presented at the opening of *FCM*, is that prior to attunements such as boredom and anxiety, we find this primordial homesickness. From out of this originary receptivity to an attunement, the human begins to interpret the beings that surround it, including its own being; in other words, it begins to do metaphysics. However, this is not to suggest that the human experiences itself as always and inalienably detached from 'home.' In *Being and Time* Heidegger describes the way in which Dasein is immersed in various kinds of moods that suffuse all of its activities, and thoroughly determine the way in which it, and its world, are made manifest. These moods are not dramatic or even conspicuous; they are part of the basic structure of our

[20] Russell, B. (2009) *Autobiography* London: Routledge p.287

Dasein. However, despite the ordinariness of these moods, they conceal the essential structure of Dasein's primordial embeddedness in and yet detachment from beings, the fundamental way in which Dasein is 'thrown' into its 'there.'[21] Beneath the 'ontically' 'most familiar' manifestation of our moods, our 'Being-attuned,' there lies a fundamental openness to beings, an openness that 'brings Being to its "there."'[22] This is the extraordinary openness that is cleaved, via the figure of man, within *physis*, which Heidegger details at length at the start of *FCM*. This openness, despite enabling man to 'speak out' of *physis*, constitutes an uncanny burden for every Dasein insofar as it wrests Dasein from the rest of nature and subjects it to an understanding of its own finite existence. However, 'for the most part,' Heidegger says, a mood 'does not turn towards the burdensome character of Dasein which is manifest in it.'[23]

Though this burdensome character may erupt in the experience of anxiety, it is not always obvious how attunements are connected to a more essential, afflictive awareness of Dasein's existentiality. In order to grasp the way in which attunements expose the deep burden of Dasein's existence, and in so doing infiltrate the entire manner in which Dasein experiences beings, it is necessary to observe the dynamic of Dasein's most 'profound' moods. Amongst attunements in general, these '*fundamental*' attunements (*Grundstimmungen*) play a foundational role. The '*grund*' component of *Grundstimmung* has two dimensions: it denotes the capacity to expose something fundamental in Dasein, and it constitutes an optic through which fundamental metaphysical questions can properly come into focus. Beistegui describes this second sense of '*grund*' as that which first enables our capacity to do metaphysics:

[21] Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* §29 p.174
[22] Ibid., p.172; p.173
[23] Ibid., p.174

> [T]he very entry into metaphysics presupposes the prior awakening of a disposition as the very soil whence metaphysical questioning grows.[24]

Fundamental attunements thus enable a kind of transparency in two directions: outwards, towards fundamental metaphysical concepts, and inwards towards Dasein as the being that poses metaphysical questions. However, these two directions are really one and the same, insofar as Dasein is wholly implicated within metaphysics, and is not a subject set against an objective world from out of which metaphysical questions emerge.

With these reflections, Heidegger's analysis of attunement in *FCM* extends his far more scanty discussion in *Being and Time*. In the latter text, Heidegger is concerned to establish transhistorical principles concerning this being that he names Dasein. In *FCM*, Heidegger begins to question the extent to which these moods that grip Dasein could themselves be historically contingent. Could the homesickness that motivates the very advent of philosophy itself have different historical guises? The fact that metaphysics always takes place from within an attunement is certainly not intended to imply that the attunement itself is something 'fixed' and unchanging. Indeed, as the outcome of a 'groundlessness,' an attunement with its 'floating' movement is surely something fluid. The kind of focus that this attunement has will be subject to change. We know that this is the case if we look back at the history of philosophy. The *way* in which man has conducted metaphysical enquiry has radically altered since the Greeks in ways that, as I have already demonstrated, Heidegger elaborates in the *Preliminary Appraisal*. Here Heidegger describes ancient philosophy as incorporating a deep understanding of the way in which man is tied into the realm of *physis*, and yet unhinged from it via the

[24] Beistegui, M. *Thinking with Heidegger* p.66

logos. The Greek understanding mutates throughout the history of philosophy, in which increased areas of specialisation and disciplinary fragmentation serve to conceal this ancient conception.[25] Heidegger is now able to describe this mutation as the result of historical shifts in the complexion of the Dasein's fundamental attunements. Dasein's understanding of itself morphs in response to these changes; as Haar puts it, history is comprised of different 'historical figures' of the human being.[26] In the wake of the ancient Greek understanding of man's essential structure, man has come to be understood first as a being created in the image of God, then as a knowing subject that grounds all cognition, then as a natural entity belonging to a biological continuum. These different 'historical figures' are grounded in distinct fundamental attunements. Each one constitutes a way of negotiating and perhaps assuaging the *Ur*-attunement of homesickness, the expression of the fundamental 'rupture' in nature that constitutes human existence. These fundamental attunements furnish an epoch with determinations concerning what counts as an entity, what counts as truth, and how we should conceive of the human's place within nature.

The idea that fundamental attunements alter throughout history provides Heidegger with further ammunition in his argument that metaphysics is not an isolable activity, that metaphysics is *itself* a kind of perspective that man has, indeed, his most fundamental perspective on entities and his own being. Philosophy, understood along these lines, is the playing out of man's status as a meta-physical being. Metaphysics is always the progeny of a tension pertaining to man's position within *physis*, however far man drifts from the antiquated knowledge of this tension.

[25] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §8c) p.29
[26] Haar, M. (1993) *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* trans. McNeill, W. New York, NY: State University of New York Press p.145

If it is the case that a deep understanding of the human's relationship to *physis* has been lost in the passages of history, and that we are now fully embedded within a complex set of narrow fields of research, each of which claims to know certain facts about human beings, how is it that we are able to levitate above these matrices of knowledge in order to recognise the overarching attunement of our age? Moreover, why would we be able to catch any glimpse whatsoever of the ancient conception of man's relationship to *physis*? Do Heidegger's statements about this relationship seem obscure when set alongside his claim that all genuine questioning has been in a state of decline since Aristotle?[27] If man has become so 'planetary,' to borrow Haar's phrase, so profoundly subjected to the 'indifference and uniformity of the technically organised universe,' so lost in his delusion that all beings, from stone, to animal, to man, are 'all given to us on the same level in exactly the same way,' why should he be able to make statements about a long-lost, far more profound truth pertaining to his existence?[28] In particular, why should one man – Heidegger – find himself in the privileged position of being able to see through the fog, of being able to appraise our 'contemporary situation' from within it, if this situation is in fact all-encompassing, and inconspicuous in its pervasiveness? Is it perhaps because there is something about our current circumstances, our contemporary 'fundamental attunement,' that provides clues to this more ancient, more originary conception? Has the Greek understanding cast a long enough shadow for us to be able to piece together a complete picture of that understanding? In Part One of *FCM* Heidegger makes a case for precisely this idea: that though we are caught up in the midst of a seemingly philosophically infertile mood, that of profound boredom, this mood can be exploited in such a way that we can retrieve the

[27] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §10 p.35
[28] Haar, M. *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* p.165; Heidegger, M. *FCM* §49 p.207

ancient understanding of man's relationship to *physis.* In order to comprehend this possibility, which would enable us to continue along the path that was embarked upon in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, that of taking up Heidegger's invitation to philosophise, it is necessary to look in more detail at our 'contemporary situation' and the specific fundamental attunement that pervades it.

The contemporary fundamental attunement: The progenitor of a division between 'life' and 'spirit'

Heidegger argues that, given that we ourselves are intimately caught up within and affected by the 'contemporary situation,' we face a peculiar type of challenge in trying to identify and appraise it in order to retrieve its concealed philosophical value. Our best hope, he claims, is to begin by familiarising ourselves with the most exemplary interpretations of the contemporary situation that currently prevail. By examining these interpretations, we can try to 'retain' something of their '*pervasive fundamental trait*,' and, in so doing, begin to glimpse their hidden philosophical import.[29] In particular, Heidegger wishes to very briefly examine four 'spokespeople' of the contemporary epoch: Oswald Spengler, Ludwig Klages, Max Scheler and Leopold Ziegler.[30]

Though this examination is brief and somewhat unassuming, (Heidegger claims that this foray into *Kulturphilosophie* is included because the four thinkers represent the received view concerning key characteristics of contemporary thinking, and not because they are philosophically enlightening on their own), the result of this examination is critical for piecing together the overarching metaphysical context of *FCM*. More specifically, as I will soon demonstrate, the analysis begins to explicitly bind the abstract examination of metaphysics that prefaces *FCM* to Heidegger's more infamous

[29] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18a) p.69
[30] Ibid.

enquiry into life, biology and the human-animal distinction in Part Two. For Heidegger, the most striking aspect of these four interpretations, and the one that is decisive for the development of the lecture course, is that each one is based around the idea of a struggle between two fundamental and apparently opposed concepts: 'life' and 'spirit.' In order to understand how the dissonant relationship between these two concepts emerges in these interpretations, and why this relationship should be of great significance to Heidegger, I will take a very brief look at Heidegger's appraisal of their content.

The first and most influential interpretation of the contemporary situation is associated with Spengler and is summarised, Heidegger says, by Spengler's provocative phrase 'the decline of the West.'[31] The first important task for our purposes, Heidegger says, is to recognise what is implicit in this phrase. When we reduce it to its most fundamental tenet, we find that Spengler is referring to 'the decline of life in and through spirit.'[32] Heidegger claims that this statement describes the peculiarly modern process whereby 'spirit,' which refers to the movement of 'reason,' seeks out new ways to assert itself over against 'life' by creating the world anew along technological lines.[33] This assertion of spirit is characterised by a dominant calculative and atomising approach to the economy and to world trade, amounting to the 'reorganisation' of existence in a manner that is epitomised by mass urbanisation.[34] Heidegger claims that this rational, rationalising force, according to Spengler's analysis, is now 'turning against' life, 'overwhelming it and forcing culture into decline and decay.'[35] Heidegger argues that the second important task is to recognise a more subtle implication of this dominant

[31] Ibid., p.70
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

cultural motif. This is the implication of what the construction of motifs of this kind says about our time, why it is that we, as Beistegui says, 'seem to want such slogans.'[36]

The second major interpretation of the contemporary epoch is one that Heidegger associates with Ludwig Klages, and in many respects it is similar to that of Spengler. However, unlike Spengler, Klages explicitly abjures spirit, understood as *ratio*, as the insidious medium through which culture is dismantled:

> Spirit is seen as the adversary of the soul. Spirit is a sickness which has to be exorcised in order to liberate the soul. Freedom from spirit here means: let's return to life![37]

Life, in this context, does not simply refer to the realm of the organic as opposed to that of the divine or of human reason. Life has a richer symbolic meaning in this context as a chaotic, fecund domain that is the impetus behind all great poetic achievement. Life, Heidegger says, 'is now taken in the sense of the obscure simmering of drives, which is simultaneously grasped as the breeding ground of the mythical.'[38] The third interpretation, articulated by Max Scheler, retains the theme of life versus spirit, but instead of simply highlighting a contemporary struggle between the two, and endorsing one or the other, this interpretation takes itself to be therapeutic to the extent that it 'attempts to find a balance between life and spirit, and regards this as its task.'[39] The human, Scheler says, somewhat more optimistically than Spengler and Klages, is currently 'in the epoch of a balance' between life and spirit.[40] Heidegger's final example incorporates aspects of the previous three. This is the interpretation of Leopold Ziegler, and it is, Heidegger says, the most 'unoriginal' and philosophically 'fragile' of

[36] Beistegui, M. *Thinking with Heidegger* p.70
[37] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18a) p.70
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

the three.[41] This fourth interpretation anticipates a 'new Middle Ages,' not a revival of what we understand as the medieval age, but a restorative middle or 'mediating' epoch in which the struggle between life and spirit can be rebalanced.

These four interpretations therefore yield what Heidegger describes as two 'catchwords:' 'life' and 'spirit,' and each speaks as if, to a greater or lesser extent, these concepts tend to be fundamentally inharmonious. By isolating these catchwords, Spengler et al. have succeeded, Heidegger says, in representing an essential facet of the cultural zeitgeist, albeit in a wholly derivative manner. As 'stereotypes' of a particular view, the interpretations '[point] out what is known today, what is spoken of, and what in part has already been forgotten again, interpretations that are partly borrowed second- and third-hand and moulded into an overall picture, views that subsequently penetrate into the higher journalism of our age and create the spiritual space – if one may say such a thing – in which we move.'[42]

Why is it that these two concepts – life and spirit – wrung from the observations of *Kulturphilosophie*, should be especially significant? Heidegger claims that the almost mundane pervasiveness of the idea that there exists an opposition between the realms of life and spirit belies its philosophical importance. The idea, Heidegger says, is derived in its entirety from older concepts of a gulf between these two domains, and the corresponding notion that man is the embodiment of this gulf, consigned to an existence in which his 'spiritual' capacity is tied to a contingent living body. In this respect, Scheler's optimistic claim that man is 'in the epoch of a balance between life and spirit' is the culmination of an ancient idea that has been handed down and has undergone

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p.71

various mutations.[43] The idea of this division harks back to the ancient metaphysics contained in the organisation of Plato's Academy – to the antiquated splitting of *physis* from *ēthos*, of so-called 'natural' beings from those associated with the human and its activities.

Each interpretation, then, appears to announce something about the complex and discordant interrelation between these two domains. Does this imply that there is something about the contemporary situation that brings 'life' and 'spirit' to the fore? These terms have surely always been adopted in discussions concerning the status of the human and its relation to 'nature,' so there cannot be anything extraordinary about their application in the contemporary situation. However, this latter observation, Heidegger says, is wrongheaded, because it is already treating these two terms 'as though they designated two components of man,' two components 'that have always been ascribed to man and whose relation has always been one of conflict.'[44] Such a presumption interprets these concepts and the relation between them in a way that is historically unencumbered and agnostic, as blanket terms that have already been grasped in a straightforward way. For Heidegger, life and spirit cannot be interpreted, as they are by Spengler et al., as properties of the human in the way that digestion or reproduction could be described as properties of an organism.[45] Rather, the terms are 'concerned with specific fundamental orientations of man,' ones that become more or less pronounced during specific phases in history, hence the particularly concentrated thematisation of these concepts in the work of Spengler et al.[46] For Heidegger it cannot, therefore, be coincidental that the four stereotypical interpretations all reduce to an

[43] Ibid., p.70
[44] Ibid., p.71
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., p.70

attempt to grasp and understand the meaning and implications of the contemporary relationship between life and spirit. The outcome of Heidegger's analysis is rather the idea that the contemporary age appears to engender a distinct awareness of the perennial metaphysical idea of a tension between the concepts of life and spirit.

What is it that enables renewed interest in this tension? Why is it that Spengler et al. all hit upon life and spirit as decisive concepts? Heidegger argues that the notion of a conflict between life and spirit, as presented in the four interpretations, is the exclusive result of a contemporary reading of Nietzsche. When we consider the terms life and spirit to represent a concern with 'specific fundamental orientations of man,' rather than properties of his structure that can be determined theoretically, we see that the terms invoke 'what Nietzsche means by the terms *Dionysian* and *Apollonian*' respectively, where the Dionysian represents the creative and destructive chaos of life and the Apollonian the rational ordering that is couched by Spengler et al. in terms of spirit.[47] The 'source' of all the theorising in the four interpretations that Heidegger cites is therefore to be located in Nietzsche, or rather, a 'particular reception of Nietzsche's philosophy.'[48] In order to grasp the 'pervasive fundamental trait' of the four interpretations, we must therefore begin by considering the dynamic of the Apollonian versus the Dionysian in Nietzsche, and the way in which this influences what Heidegger takes to be the 'higher journalism' of Spengler et al.

Heidegger examines the opposition between these concepts only very briefly, and only insofar as it motivates contemporary attempts to get to grips with the distinction between life and spirit. The opposition, Heidegger says, is an ancient one, and

[47] Ibid., p.71
[48] Ibid.

constitutes a major theme from the start of Nietzsche's philosophy.[49] On what grounds is Nietzsche's appropriation of the Dionysian-Apollonian opposition to be distinguished from the later speculations of Spengler, Klages, Scheler and Ziegler concerning the life-spirit distinction? It is clear from the tone of Heidegger's abrupt turn to Nietzsche that Nietzsche's presence in his analysis exceeds the role of a progenitor of some reflections on life and spirit. Where the proponents of 'higher journalism' deal with these concepts theoretically, Nietzsche, Heidegger says, confronted them directly from within an active, living philosophising:

> This opposition, taken from antiquity, inevitably revealed itself to the young classical philologist who wanted to break with his discipline. Yet he […] knew that however much this opposition is maintained in his philosophising, it became transformed for him in and through this philosophising. Nietzsche himself knew: "Only whoever transforms himself is related to me."[50]

In this brief engagement with Nietzsche we discover, once again, echoes of a Romantic sensibility in the conception of philosophising and the philosopher that Heidegger presents in *FCM*. Through Nietzsche, Heidegger re-emphasises his lamentation, in the early passages of the lecture course, of the lacerations that modern metaphysics has wrought in man's being. Having placed himself at the mercy of the facultative divisions that have colonised and domesticated the unified Greek conception of the human, Heidegger describes modern man as having wedded himself, in an almost masochistic attitude, to the very categories that divide him up and disfigure him. In a discussion of Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Humanity*, Charles Taylor remarks in a similar vein that, for the Romantics, the result of the modern preoccupation with drawing distinctions is that 'men have become so specialised' that 'instead of expressing the

[49] Ibid., §18b) p.72
[50] Ibid.

whole, each is only a fragment (Bruchstück) of humanity.'[51] In recognising that these divisions must be replaced by an exuberant confrontation with the challenge of Pre-Socratic culture, i.e. in recognising that these ensnaring categories and distinctions are ones that we impose upon the primordial, more endangering but all the more essential attitude to existence that was embodied in antiquity, Nietzsche places himself, according to Heidegger, at the centre of his own philosophical project; he 'lives' his philosophical enquiries, and does so in the light of a sensitive suspicion of the corrosive life-spirit opposition.

Nietzsche thus comes on the scene not as another cultural diagnostician, but as one who is engaged in a living philosophising, which means, for Heidegger, one who implicates himself directly in his philosophising, and one who is therefore ready to respond to the challenge of philosophy in all its 'perilousness' and ambiguity. By contrast, the analyses of Spengler et al. never get beyond the realm of 'worldview' because they only ever amount to a journalistic exchange of opinions; they 'diagnose' but do not think philosophically in the manner that Heidegger is attempting to facilitate in *FCM*. Cultural diagnosis, like all kinds of diagnosis, must presuppose a schema concerning the fundamental way in which the subject of the diagnosis is made manifest. When traced to its etymological root, the term 'diagnosis,' from the Greek *dia-gignōskein*, designates a 'setting apart,' a process of distinction-making that is based on a 'recognition,' a 'thorough knowledge.' This attitude of prior certainty is clearly opposed to the attitude of attentive openness in the face of our essential 'homesickness,' our precise absence of thorough diagnostic knowledge that Heidegger sees as a requisite of all philosophising.

[51] Taylor, C. (1975) *Hegel* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.28

In contrast to this diagnostic use of the concepts of life and spirit, the question of the Dionysian-Apollonian distinction is taken up by Nietzsche as one that he intends to experience directly rather than to ruminate on from a distance. Heidegger demonstrates this more deeply philosophical attitude by citing Nietzsche's radically autobiographical account of the Dionysian in *The Will to Power*. Having just described his disenchantment with philology, Nietzsche says the following:

> I understood that my instinct was heading in the opposite direction to that of Schopenhauer: toward a *justification of life*, even in its most frightful, most ambiguous, and most deceptive aspects: – for this I held the formula 'Dionysian' in my hands.[52]

Heidegger then cites later aphorisms from the same work, in which Nietzsche indicates his understanding of the opposition:

> Apollo's illusion: the *eternity* of beautiful form; the aristocratic legislation '*thus it shall be always!*'
>
> Dionysus: sensuousness and cruelty. Transitoriness could be interpreted as enjoyment of productive and destructive energy, as *constant creation*.[53]

Regardless of their 'correctness,' each of the cultural diagnosticians has already failed to get to grips with Nietzsche's thought insofar as none of them take on the matter of this opposition as a problem that bears upon their existence directly.[54] Ultimately, Heidegger says, 'none can be correct, insofar as they all mistake the essence of Nietzsche's philosophy.'[55] The only claim that can be made at this stage is that 'Nietzsche is the source of the interpretations we have mentioned. We are not saying this in order to accuse these interpretations of being derivative or to detract from their

[52] Cited in Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18b) p.72
[53] Ibid., p.73
[54] Ibid., p.74
[55] Ibid.

originality in any way, but in order to designate the direction from out of which an understanding is to be gained and to show where the place of the confrontation proper lies.'[56]

Despite their ability to articulate the idea that these concepts are caught up in a perennial interplay, Heidegger's four cultural diagnosticians do not 'confront' the original opposition behind the catchwords that they emphasise. From the inception of their analyses they envisage a split field of beings in which spirit and life are envisaged as identifiable categories that are separated out from one another. Nietzsche, by contrast, is described as one who has managed to retrieve the original spirit of philosophising that Heidegger takes to be the motivation of pre-Socratic thought, which enjoyed a philosophical zenith before undergoing the Apollonian colonisation of Plato's Academy and the general systematisation and tempering of thought. Nietzsche has, according to Heidegger, managed to avoid being straitjacketed by the divisions that have prevailed throughout history: *physis* versus *ēthos*, life versus spirit, and man versus nature.

From life and spirit to diagnosis and prognosis: The genesis of man's profound boredom with himself

Prima facie, the four examples that Heidegger takes from *Kulturphilosophie* do not appear to move the lecture course in any particular direction. This is because an ambivalence shrouds the emergence of the concepts of life and spirit, and the notion of an opposition between them. On the one hand, these concepts illuminate the common 'fundamental trait' of the contemporary situation. We are left with the impression that life and spirit are concepts that are implicit in the metaphysics of the contemporary age.

[56] Ibid.

And yet, on the other hand, Heidegger presents the analyses of the four authors he selects as somewhat mundane, perhaps even boring. However, it is precisely this 'boringness,' this absence of anything stirring in their interpretations, that is of most significance to Heidegger. The 'whole approach' of cultural diagnostics, Heidegger tells us, is 'non-binding and is interesting for just this reason,' interesting because it does not force us in any particular direction, and interesting because this lack of any force itself demonstrates something peculiar about the efforts of contemporary man to interpret himself.[57]

In the absence of any possibility of capturing something essential about Dasein, the cultural diagnostician is free to speculate in bold tones about the fate of contemporary man. Speaking from an unoriginal, philosophically superficial perspective, the approach, Heidegger says, nevertheless becomes 'even more exciting' when it moves from 'diagnosis' to 'prognosis.'[58] Cultural prognoses are seductive insofar as they reveal patterns that enable us to predict the future, and produce comforting declarations concerning our 'condition.' However, these 'world-historical' diagnoses and prognoses, Heidegger says, 'do not involve us, they *do not attack us*. On the contrary, they release us from ourselves and present us to ourselves in a world-historical situation and role.'[59] In other words, these attempts to ascertain our current and future situations do not force us to confront ourselves. Rather, by subscribing to them, we allow ourselves to become hostage to a set of conceptions regarding the predicament and destiny of humankind. The whole phenomenon of cultural diagnosis and prognosis is therefore 'sensational,' which means, Heidegger says, that it develops out of an 'unconceded' 'illusory appeasement' (*scheinbare Beruhigung*), i.e. it implicitly absolves us of the task of

[57] Ibid., §18c) p.75
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

confronting existence directly by inventing world-historical forces to which we hold ourselves captive.[60]

Is it perhaps the case that this willingness to be held captive by a self-generated diagnostic exercise says more about the nature of the contemporary situation than the content of the diagnosis itself? This seems to be Heidegger's train of thought. Of necessity, Heidegger says, cultural diagnosis will have to bypass any opportunity to grasp the 'Da-sein' in man, insofar as it fails to recognise that its very attempt at diagnosis is itself part of that which needs to be interrogated.[61] Without having considered the essential structure of existence as such, it proceeds to predict its historical development by undergoing a 'setting-out [Dar-stellung]' of man.[62]

The irony of the situation, according to Heidegger, is that *Kulturphilosophie*, despite claiming to know about the human, actually corrupts any possibility of grasping human existence 'essentially.'[63] For in 'setting-out' what the human is, *Kulturphilosophie* treats the human being as a single item in an already-ascertained taxonomy of beings. Heidegger claims that, unlike Nietzsche, Spengler et al. therefore miss the simple but crucial fact that 'when we ask about the essence of man we are asking about *ourselves*,' and not about some other being in nature; we are trying to face who *we* are essentially.[64] Though Spengler et al. theorise about the 'human condition,' they do so as if the human were a composite of properties, some life-like, some spirit-like, that is somehow detached from us as questioners. In seeking out this kind of scientific objectivity, they produce theories about the human that fail to engage us, that serve to 'untie us' from

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., §7 p.21
[62] Ibid., §18c) p.76
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., §67 p.281

any confrontation with ourselves, and yet do so 'precisely as anthropology.'[65] In other words, it is precisely in turning towards the human as an object of study that Spengler et al. preclude the possibility of grasping anything essential about the human.

With regards to the wider project of *FCM*, that of responding to Heidegger's challenge to us to begin philosophising for ourselves, what are we to make of this brief assessment of contemporary *Kulturphilosophie*? There are two important observations to be made. Firstly, according to Heidegger, the boredom that compels us to seek out cultural diagnoses provides an important clue concerning the fundamental attunement that grips contemporary Dasein. Secondly, the content of these diagnoses concerning life and spirit, despite their derivative character and mundanity, contain shades of the more originary metaphysical picture that Heidegger traces in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, and which he wishes to restore in *FCM* by awakening us to our contemporary fundamental attunement and its philosophical potential. Heidegger therefore has a specific use for this material. It is part of his philosophical restoration project, part of his attempt to bring about a philosophical confrontation with ourselves, a genuine 'living philosophising.'[66] Despite the vehemence of his critique of the cultural diagnosticians, Heidegger does wish to wrest something significant from them, namely the idea that a pervasive boredom resounds throughout all of their accounts. Whether or not we consider Heidegger to be justified in distinguishing himself from Spengler et al., he does not consider himself to be following the path of cultural diagnosis. Instead he wishes to position it on the rung of a ladder that eventually leads to metaphysics.

Heidegger claims that from within the deep boredom that grips the contemporary epoch, Spengler, Scheler, Klages and Ziegler forecast out beyond this boredom, all the

[65] Ibid., §18c) p.77
[66] Ibid., §15 p.57

while knowing nothing of the mood's affective power. The previous chapter described the way in which, for Heidegger, Dasein is the only being that 'speaks out of the whole and into it.'[67] In the spirit of this observation, Heidegger wishes to speak into, and not merely out of, the fundamental attunement that grips Dasein. He wishes to render explicit what he sees as implicit in the preoccupation he has identified with the life-spirit opposition. In so doing he elucidates the reason why such a struggle to appropriate this opposition, and its connection to Nietzsche, would occur in the contemporary age, an age characterised by a demand for new ways to conceptualise this struggle:

> Have we become too *insignificant* to ourselves, that we require a role? Why do we find no meaning for ourselves any more, i.e., no essential possibility of being? Is it because an *indifference* yawns at us out of all things, an indifference whose grounds we do not know? Yet who can speak in such a way when world trade, technology, and the economy seize hold of man and keep him moving? And nevertheless *we* seek a *role for ourselves*. What is happening here?, we ask anew. Must we first make ourselves interesting again? Why *must* we do this? Perhaps because we have become *bored* with ourselves? Is man himself now supposed to have become bored with himself? Why so? *Do things ultimately stand in such a way with us that a profound boredom draws back and forth like a silent fog in the abysses of Dasein?*[68]

The frenzied attempts to grasp the intractable opposition between life and spirit is, then, an indication of a pervasive and profound indifference towards ourselves. Why would it be the case that in a globalised epoch, in which we are capable of accessing new and sophisticated means for measuring man, of understanding all of his various components, and of collecting and disseminating information about him, we would need to battle with a languid indifference, a 'profound boredom' concerning human existence as such? Is there something antithetical here? Not according to Heidegger.

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[67] Ibid., §75 p.353
[68] Ibid., §18c) p.77

We may know how to 'measure' the human, but Heidegger argues that this process of measuring does not disclose anything 'essential' about it. One may dismiss this as unfounded pessimism, and assert that the contemporary age is one in which all aspects of human existence – biological, intellectual, social, political and spiritual – are at our disposal. However, for Heidegger, this type of confidence is itself symptomatic of the fact that man has become bored with himself, and that this boredom is something that we deny because we '*do not want* to know about' it.[69]

Though it seems that *FCM* has arrived at the threshold of this fundamental attunement of profound boredom somewhat abruptly, Heidegger will dedicate most of Part One of the lecture course to examining the phenomenological manifestation of this mood in order to justify his claim that boredom is *the* fundamental attunement of the contemporary epoch. The implication of this claim, as the following chapter will seek to show, is not that boredom is a wellspring of philosophical potentiality, and that if we can only tap into this attunement, we will be well on the way towards genuine metaphysics, and a proper engagement with who we are. Indeed, at first glance boredom appears to be an unlikely candidate for a metaphysical launch pad. The mood is surely soporific and tedious in a manner that corrupts rather than facilitates the activity of philosophising. It is indeed the case that boredom is stultifying, but Heidegger will argue that if we endure rather than flee from this stultification, the clamour of our attempts to distract ourselves – our frenzied determination to subscribe to grand narratives concerning our condition and role in history – begins to subside. As this attachment to these prognostications lessens, a space is created, Heidegger claims,

[69] Ibid., §19 p.78

for a genuine wakeful recognition of Dasein's being and its relation, via the activity of metaphysics, to *physis*.

Chapter Four: A journey through boredom

The dual potentiality of profound boredom

From what has been said in the previous chapter, it is clear that in *FCM* the phenomenon of attunement has become historical. Heidegger is providing us with a way into philosophy from within our specific historical standpoint. In his treatment of this phenomenon in *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasised the dual perspective of fundamental moods, the way in which they illuminate Dasein's own being as well as that of Dasein's world. However, in his discussion in the latter text of anxiety, the mood in which Dasein and its relation to world are disclosed as remote, obscure and burdensome, Heidegger does not attempt to question the ways in which this mood may be contingent upon history. Boredom, on the other hand, emerges within a discussion of a specific phase in the history of metaphysics. Evidence of a mood of deep indifference at the heart of man's understanding of himself, which is embodied in the frenetic hypothesising of Spengler et al., comes to the fore when we turn our attention inward and question how things 'stand with us.'[1]

Thus far in the lecture course, Heidegger has attempted, from an external perspective, to justify the idea that the fundamental attunement of contemporary Dasein is that of profound boredom. What follows is a lengthy examination of the 'internal' life of this mood, the phenomenological manifestations of boredom. The point of this phase of the lecture course is to lead us, via this 'ground-level' examination of boredom, to a deeper understanding of who we are, which also means to the threshold of metaphysics.

Throughout Heidegger's analysis of this fundamental attunement he argues that boredom contains two distinct possibilities. We know from his examination of

[1] Heidegger M. *FCM* §18c) p.76

Kulturphilosophie that one of these possibilities is that we wed ourselves to the territory of 'worldview,' which is one direction in which the activity of metaphysics can be misunderstood. In pursuing this direction, Dasein seeks out diagnostic narratives to account for its existence and role in history. Another dimension of this first possibility, hinted at in Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal*, is that Dasein occupies itself with science, another direction in which the true meaning of metaphysics is misconstrued. Heidegger claims that, like cultural diagnosis, science begins from a position of 'thorough knowledge,' and proceeds to make distinctions and predictions based on an epistemic schema that is already in place. Heidegger notes that he is referring to the original Greek concept of science as *episteme*, which means, Heidegger says, 'to stand before a matter, to know one's way around it.'[2] Both of these dimensions — science and worldview – amount to one possible response to the attunement of profound boredom.

Heidegger claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that the fundamental '*Ur*-attunement' of philosophising is homesickness.[3] It seems as if, by substituting philosophy with the fixed schemas of thought contained in science and worldview, we could anchor our enquiries and thereby ameliorate the insecurity that underpins this homesickness. However, Heidegger insists that the drama contained in the images of the human's position in the world drawn up in *Kulturphilosophie*, and the seductive sense of accuracy and organisation that belongs to the sciences, simply serve to cover over this primordial homesickness. Unlike philosophy, these avenues of enquiry '*do not attack us*' with the full force of a genuine confrontation with ourselves.[4] Heidegger therefore wishes to use his analysis of profound boredom to explore a second possibility in

[2] Ibid., §9 p.32
[3] Ibid., §2b) p.5
[4] Ibid., §18c) p.75

which, rather than fighting it and trying to replace it with 'exciting' new ways of interpreting man, we steady ourselves, and begin to move in tandem with boredom, 'listening' to what this attunement tells us about our situation.[5]

In order to arrive at this second possibility, Heidegger will take us on a journey through boredom. Sticking with him despite the boredom that threatens to engulf this very journey is part of the philosophical challenge Heidegger is setting: the entirely counterintuitive, 'almost insane demand [*Zumutung*]' that we fully open ourselves to boredom.[6] If we manage to endure this extraordinary demand, Heidegger claims that we will begin to discover something about our own contemporary metaphysics, and about ourselves as contemporary Dasein. This journey, which looks like a somewhat obscure development in Heidegger's overarching challenge that we begin to philosophise for ourselves, also begins to unveil something of the three titular fundamental concepts of metaphysics: world, finitude and solitude. The 'forms' of boredom that Heidegger traces in these sections each correspond to one of these fundamental concepts, reinforcing our understanding of the conspicuousness of these perennial concepts in the contemporary epoch.

Heidegger hopes, by the end of Part One of the lecture course, to have justified the idea that profound boredom is *our* fundamental attunement, one that infiltrates the way in which we encounter beings *qua* contemporary Dasein. Insofar as this mood brings to light the three irreducible metaphysical contexts of world, finitude and solitude, these are likewise *our* contexts. These concepts are ideas that pertain to us directly, and, once we have recognised and taken ownership of them, we will be able to set our understanding of them in motion and finally begin to do metaphysics for ourselves,

[5] Ibid., §31a) p.139
[6] Ibid., §19 p.79

which means, by extension, that we will come closer to an understanding of who we are.

The three forms of boredom

Precisely what kind of mood is Heidegger referring to when he speaks of boredom? The German term, *Langeweile*, designates boredom as a state in which time 'becomes drawn out, becomes long [*lang*].'[7] This state is one we tend to avoid by means of our efforts to 'pass the time,' to make time appear short and thus desirable once more, by pursuing different activities.[8] Do we thereby expunge our lives of any boredom? No, boredom is a constant threat, however ingeniously we attempt to pass the time that it intercepts. Rather than 'annihilating' boredom, Heidegger claims that we simply 'cause it to *fall asleep*.'[9] For the most part, we 'do not wish to let it be awake – it, this boredom which, in the end, is already awake,' and with its 'gaze' 'already penetrates us and attunes us through and through.'[10] From this brief consideration of the basic structure of boredom, Heidegger infers that there is no need to postulate or 'invent' boredom as a possible attunement, nor to force boredom to 'awaken.'[11] Instead, Heidegger claims that the task we face is that of '*letting it be awake, guarding against it falling asleep*.'[12] Keeping boredom from sleep, Heidegger says, will not be easy; it is a 'strange,' even 'insane' request, an imposition.[13] The strangeness and insanity of this imposition stems from its insistence that we overthrow our deeply habitual tendency to eliminate boredom by passing the time. What would it really mean to make ourselves vulnerable to boredom on purpose, to turn boredom itself into a project, to sit with our boredom in such a way

[7] Ibid., p.78
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p.79
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., §16a) pp.59-60
[12] Ibid., §19 p.79
[13] Ibid.

that allows us to examine it whilst being bored? All types of careful examination call for an alertness that is surely alien to the attunement of boredom. To know boredom, Heidegger says, is surely to know that it cannot fortify us in any way, that on the contrary it is a force that 'torments' and 'depresses,' and that, even when we attempt to drive it away, it can become 'stubborn, obstinate; that it then really does persist and returns more frequently, slowly propelling us to the threshold of melancholy [*Schwermut*].'[14]

The object of Heidegger's investigation is to navigate these various difficulties in order to understand how boredom behaves as a fundamental attunement, that is, as a means of disclosing beings that also discloses something essential about our own being.[15] The aim is thus to examine *our* boredom, to test out the idea that we exist in the clutches of a profound boredom. Heidegger argues that we can only achieve this goal by removing the indeterminacy and obscurity of boredom. We should, he claims, avoid all descriptions of boredom as a psychological phenomenon, and simply consider the various ways in which we are bored. Heidegger therefore begins by analysing the most conspicuous, recognisable form of boredom, and then moves on to consider less conspicuous but increasingly deep manifestations of the mood.

Each of the types of boredom that Heidegger analyses discloses one of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics. As the stages of boredom increase in profundity, Heidegger begins to justify why world, finitude and individuation are *the* three fundamental concepts that circumscribe and determine the kind of being that Dasein is. It is at this metaphysical level of enquiry, and not at the level of punchy 'journalistic' appraisals concerning man as a mediator between life and spirit, that we approach the

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., §20 p.82

threshold of metaphysics and thereby begin to understand who we are. Success in this endeavour depends upon our ability to plunge into boredom, to circumnavigate and understand it, and not, in the manner of Spengler et al., to make blind proclamations from within it.

The following scenarios are thus used by Heidegger as gateways for grasping contemporary Dasein's three fundamental concepts of metaphysics. The first 'form' of boredom, 'becoming bored by something,' connects us to the first of these concepts: world. From within the clutches of this most familiar version of the mood, the worldly entities that surround us become boring; the world is experienced as boring. The second form of boredom, 'becoming bored with something,' reveals the second fundamental concept of metaphysics: individuation. This breed of boredom is one in which we ourselves are the source of our boredom. It therefore exposes the burdensome conspicuousness and 'solitude' of our own individual Dasein. Finally, the third form of boredom, 'it is boring for one,' illuminates the third fundamental concept: finitude. Heidegger claims that it is in those moments in which 'it is boring,' not for this or that person but for a general 'undifferentiated no one,' that Dasein glimpses its radical temporality, its status as a transitory opening onto existence that emerges and fades in time.[16]

Two important clarifications are necessary at this point. Firstly, Heidegger does not mean to imply any sort of privilege in claiming that these three fundamental concepts are the exclusive reserve of Dasein. We know from the *Preliminary Appraisal* that Heidegger interprets world, finitude and solitude as concepts that belong first and foremost to metaphysics, and, coextensively, to Dasein. Secondly, it is not the case that

[16] Ibid., §30 p.135

these concepts are implicit within boredom but are not found in any other kind of attunement. Heidegger describes boredom, in this regard, as exhibiting a kind of neutrality; it will not spontaneously give rise to a deep knowledge of world, finitude and individuation. The demand contained in *FCM* is that we reach this point for ourselves, that we recognise and pursue the 'second possibility' of profound boredom by garnering a philosophical relationship to this attunement rather than fleeing from it into the palliative arms of worldview or science. If we give ourselves over to the dynamic of boredom, we will discover that the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics remain dormant in our epoch. We will be reminded that these concepts have not disappeared; they still represent essential landmarks in our enquiry into metaphysics and man, each revealing something essential about who we are, our connection to *physis*, and the activity of metaphysics. Having gained an awareness of the inflection that these concepts are given within the contemporary attunement, we can begin to work them out one by one.

i) Becoming bored by something: World

Heidegger begins with the most 'basic' form of boredom: 'becoming bored by something,' the form in which worldly entities show up as boring. Whilst waiting at a deserted country railway station, we go to all possible lengths to 'pass the time:' we read the timetables, wander up and down the platform, or continually check our watch. In so doing, we attempt to 'drive away' the boredom that '*drives time on*.'[17] Presumably, we are attempting to drive away the period of waiting. However, waiting, which involves suspense rather than listlessness, is not equivalent to boredom.[18] In boredom we do not experience time, or the dragging of time as an identifiable property.

[17] Ibid., §23a) p.95
[18] Ibid., p.94

We cannot infer that, after four hours of some boring activity, we will become bored, because we may become bored during a five minute conversation, or at a party that lasts eight hours. Our use of units of measurement such as minutes and hours as a means of 'entrapping' time gives the illusion that time is constant and 'unwavering,' when in fact, considered phenomenologically, time is 'temperamental' and prone to expansions and contractions.[19] Heidegger claims that rather than calculating the progression of time as a measure for boredom, we need to consider the manner in which, in boredom, time becomes '*too* slow' *for us*, and the ways in which we 'fight *against*' this apparent slowing down of time.[20] What we are attempting to combat is the fact that, in this dragging of time, boredom '*holds us in limbo*. We fight this peculiar vacillating and dragging of time' which becomes 'burdensome' for us.[21]

Passing the time, then, amounts to '*wanting to overcome the vacillation of time*,' and the 'oppressive' and 'paralysing' effect that this has.[22] Though we are always at the mercy of time, to the extent that we are always 'in' time, boredom enacts a '*peculiar impressing* [Andrängen] *of the power of that time* to which we are bound.'[23] In other words, boredom underscores the way in which time 'temporalizes' itself, and the manner in which this temporalization determines all of our activities.[24] How and why does this dragging 'oppress' us? Oppression implies a stifling closeness, and yet that which drags is surely 'held back' and hence 'distant,' not 'before us' and therefore not oppressive.[25] This being held back and yet, at the same time, remaining oppressively close is implied in Heidegger's claim that, in boredom, time 'holds us in limbo.'[26]

[19] Ibid., §23b) p.98
[20] Ibid., p.97
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p.98
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., §23c) p.99
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., §21 p.86

Though this 'holding in limbo' provides us with some leeway, Heidegger claims that the 'slowness' of time restricts us nonetheless.[27] 'Slowness' lingers in these boring moments, but disappears as soon as we are actively engaged with some activity.[28]

When we scan the train timetables or wander up and down the platform during our wait, we are not seriously interested in either of these activities. We do them so as to stave off a second feature of boredom: the manner in which, in boredom, we are 'left empty.'[29] The failure of entities to engage us in the railway station scenario is precisely what renders them boring. These entities 'leave us in peace, do not disturb us […] They *abandon us to ourselves.*'[30] However, despite this abandonment, we remain trapped by these entities. Heidegger claims that, though we are granted some flexibility concerning how we pass the time, we are still at the beck and call of this situation, at once 'held in limbo' and 'left empty' by it.[31]

In Heidegger's description of this first form of boredom, the attempts that we make to pass the time whilst being stranded at the railway station amount to attempts to make the world interesting again. We are bored by our circumstances, and the entities that bear down on us, whilst offering us no possibility of relief, also appear boring. 'World' has become conspicuous in its boringness, world understood, Harman says, as 'a system of interrelated things whose emptiness holds us in limbo.'[32] The apparently superficial struggle that this version of boredom contains belies a deeper metaphysical significance. It has opened up the first of the three perennial themes of metaphysics.

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., §23c) p.100
[29] Ibid., §23d) p.101
[30] Ibid., p.103
[31] Ibid.
[32] Harman, G. (2007) *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing* Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing Company p.86

ii) Becoming bored with something: Individuation

In the first form of boredom, entities '*abandon us to ourselves.*'[33] The world offers nothing of interest in these instances. It is almost as if the world simply holds a mirror before us, leaving us with nothing but our own reflection. What does being left 'undisturbed' to our own devices mean for the sense of emptiness that characterises boredom? Rather than being eliminated, Heidegger claims that we ourselves become the object of this emptiness. The second form of boredom marks this shift from the concept of a desolation pertaining to beings as a whole, i.e. to world, to a desolation pertaining to Dasein itself as this being in the midst of beings. By highlighting, via this emptiness, the conspicuousness of Dasein's own sense of itself, this version of boredom illuminates the second of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics: individuation.

Heidegger uses another example to illustrate this second form. We are invited to a friend's dinner party, and, though our presence is not obligatory, we go because we have nothing else planned; we have time to go. The evening, as expected, is one of pleasant food and conversation, the tone of which is amusing and mellow. The evening soon passes and we find ourselves back at home. There was surely nothing boring about this evening, and yet, Heidegger says, we 'cast a quick glance at the work we interrupted […], make a rough assessment of things and look ahead to the next day – and then it comes: I was bored after all this evening.'[34] Can this boredom be understood, as in the first scenario, in terms of the attempt of the bored individual to pass the time? Presumably not, since we were not engaged in such an attempt during the evening. Rather than a straightforward absence of passing the time, Heidegger describes a kind of 'transformation' in the way in which time is passed.[35] Instead of engaging in

[33] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §23d) p.103
[34] Ibid., §24b) p.109
[35] Ibid., p.111

diversionary activities during the evening, the evening itself, taken as a whole, is an attempt to pass the time.[36] It is this very passing the time, this very attempt to occupy ourselves, which bores us.

A distinction thus emerges between the first and second forms of boredom. In the first case, Heidegger says, we are able to identify a '*determinate boring thing*.'[37] In the second case, we have '*something indeterminate that bores us*;' time does not appear to drag, we do not feel oppressed, and yet we are bored.[38] What is boring here is 'that "*I know not what*," that unknown in the whole situation in response to which the evening itself – which comprises the situation – is organised.'[39] This latter case is peculiar because nothing obvious appears to hold us in limbo, and any emptiness is filled by the evening, so it is unclear what we are 'left empty' by. The example indicates an '*expansion*' and an '*inconspicuousness*' of passing the time, since passing the time is not a spontaneous diversionary tactic but constitutes the evening as a whole.[40] As such, the evening is inconspicuous in its non-boringness and 'casualness.'[41] Just as the surrounding beings at the railway station leave us empty by being at hand without engaging us, the dinner party leaves us empty on account of its effortlessness. Nothing about it confronts us; we go along with the pleasantries without any agitation. However, Heidegger claims that precisely this absence of agitation is a sign of a more fundamental problem, i.e. a more disturbing and more profound kind of being left empty:

> [I]n this casualness we abandon ourselves [*uns überlassen*] to our being there alongside and part of things. This entails that any seeking to be satisfied by beings is absent in advance. Being left empty does

[36] Ibid., p.112
[37] Ibid., §25a) p.114
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., p.115
[40] Ibid., §25b) p.116
[41] Ibid., §25a) p.114

> not now first ensue in and through the absence of fullness, the refusal of this or that being, rather it *grows from the depths*, because its own precondition, namely seeking to be satisfied by beings, is already obstructed in such casualness. It now no longer even arises. Here too what bores us has the character of leaving us empty, but of a leaving empty that attacks more profoundly; it is a preventing of that seeking, and the diffusion of casualness.[42]

Heidegger claims that because we do not drive this boredom away, we albeit indirectly and non-intentionally allow it to '*be there* [da-sein]' as what it is.[43] The casualness with which we participate in the dinner party conceals a deeper kind of being left empty, which stems from the fact that we are 'seeking nothing further' from the situation, a situation that appears full and satisfying.[44] In this casualness we abandon ourselves to the situation, and, in so doing, 'leave ourselves behind.'[45] This constitutes a deeper breed of emptiness than that associated with becoming bored by…, which, Heidegger says, 'consisted merely in the absence of fullness.'[46] In the second form of boredom, time does not drag; we 'have' time, hence our decision to attend the party. And yet this very having of time, the very fact that time temporarily 'releases' us and allows us to pursue activities of our own choosing, is even more pronounced evidence of our being fundamentally bound to time. This being bound, and yet temporarily granted time for ourselves during the dinner party, only to be bound once more, epitomises the second structural moment of being held in limbo. The time that we 'leave' ourselves reveals itself not as a steady flowing or as an unbearable oppression, but as something that has come to a standstill. This 'standing of time,' Heidegger says, is 'a *more originary holding in limbo*, which is to say, *oppressing*.'[47]

[42] Ibid., §25b) p.117
[43] Ibid., p.118
[44] Ibid., p.119
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., p.120
[47] Ibid., §25c) p.122

Finding ourselves in this suspension of time, we unhinge ourselves from our past and future. By participating in the dinner party, we give ourselves over to this standing of time, and in so doing we 'bring time to a stand,' to an extended 'now' rather than a series of moments, and this standing of time holds us in limbo.[48] Heidegger claims that Dasein itself is directly implicated in the dynamic of this second form. Whereas in the first scenario 'what is boring comes from outside, as it were,' i.e. comes directly from the 'world,' in the second scenario that which is boring '*arises from out of Dasein itself.*'[49] Dasein becomes acutely aware of itself as this being that freely chose to go to the dinner party, to subject itself to this suspension in time. Dasein thus experiences, in and through this self-infliction, the irreducibility of itself, its individuation, which cannot be set aside or dispersed into the sociable atmosphere of the dinner party. As Harman says, the boring thing in this scenario 'is not world' in the sense of a plethora of entities that go to make up a situation, but rather 'the *solitude* of your Dasein.'[50] The increased profundity of this second form is evident here, insofar as it clearly ties into Heidegger's guiding thesis that contemporary man has become bored with *himself*. The dinner party is a microcosm of a far more pervasive situation in which one pretends to be interested without being gripped, an attitude that spawns the 'higher journalism' of cultural diagnosis described in the previous chapter.

iii) Profound boredom

a) The profundity of profound boredom: the 'telling refusal' of beings

The deepening of the third, final form of boredom is due to the way in which it turns on the structure of Dasein, rather than occupying itself with external entities or situations. Heidegger describes profound boredom as a joining together and deepening of the first

[48] Ibid., p.124
[49] Ibid., §27 p.128
[50] Harman, G. *Heidegger Explained* p.87

two forms. It is not simply the world, or ourselves that is experienced as boring, but rather both of these taken together in such a way that the peculiar linkage between Dasein and world is revealed. This revelation is exposed, Heidegger argues, within scenarios in which 'it is boring for one.'[51] This 'one' is not intended to invoke the concept of the self as an individual ego with all its factical idiosyncrasies, set against the objective world. On the contrary, features such as age, vocation, fate etc., all recede in the face of this boredom. What remains is not an abstract ego, but an 'undifferentiated no one.'[52] Heidegger claims that, unlike the first two, this third form of boredom is difficult to exemplify. It is not tied to any concrete scenario, and it is therefore unclear how it could possibly constitute a version of 'passing the time.' However, the elusive nature of this boredom, and the subsequent 'powerlessness' of all attempts to counteract it, provides the most decisive clue for clarifying its structure.[53] For this powerlessness is a sign that the attunement 'has already *transformed Dasein* in such a way that in our being transformed we also understand that not only would it be hopeless to want to struggle against this attunement with some form of passing the time, but that it would almost be something presumptuous to close ourselves off from what this attunement wishes to tell us.'[54] The upshot here is that this third form suffuses us in a far deeper way than the first and the second, since 'to no longer permit any passing the time means to let boredom be overpowering.'[55] The fact that we are unable to redirect or stave off this boredom means that it is indifferent to the contingencies of our factical lives. It is a *fundamental* attunement, i.e. one that is capable of '*manifesting*

[51] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §30 p.134
[52] Ibid., p.135. This idea is notably close to Heidegger's characterisation of *das Man* in *Being and Time*, where he describes the homogenous 'they' to which Dasein succumbs as follows: 'The "who" is not this one, not that one, not oneself [man selbst], not some people [einige], and not the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, *the "they"* [*das Man*]' (§27 p.164).
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., pp.135-6
[55] Ibid., p.136

how things stand concerning us.'[56] It exposes our basic drive towards the disclosure of entities, as well as revealing something of the entities that we are driven to disclose. Insofar as we cannot deny or delay this boredom, Heidegger claims that we are '*compelled to listen* […] in the sense of that kind of compelling force which everything *properly authentic* about Dasein possesses, and which accordingly is related to Dasein's *innermost freedom*.'[57]

Only by submitting to the force of profound boredom do we stand a chance of glimpsing this freedom, and understanding that it is a boredom that we cannot simply overcome. For all their busyness, *Kulturphilosophie* and scientific research do not alleviate profound boredom, but merely paint over it using bold patterns. Heidegger argues that the appeal of the projection and rigour contained within these disciplines has whipped contemporary Dasein into a vortex of activity in which it has long forgotten the genuinely philosophical origins from which these disciplines derive their significance. Heidegger's hope, at this stage, is that we now know enough about this attunement to recognise that this frantic response to boredom isn't really a response at all, that it is merely a distraction, a misunderstanding of what is entailed in genuine questioning. The attempt of these disciplines to make man interesting presupposes that he is the type of being who needs to be made interesting, that he is not already interesting or that we have lost interest in him. Such attempts are the unwitting by-products the non-negotiable, 'unambiguous' emptiness of profound boredom.[58]

Heidegger claims that this emptiness is neither the 'absence of fullness,' nor the self-inflicted emptiness that characterises the second form of boredom. Chasing away this

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., §31a) p.137

far more thorough kind of desolation is not an option as it was in the first two scenarios. It is an emptiness felt *both* in relation to the world, *and* in relation to ourselves. Heidegger claims that through it we experience directly the solitude into which every Dasein is thrown. Under such circumstances, Heidegger says, 'as this person in each case, we want nothing from the particular beings in the contingent situation as these very beings.'[59] The result is that a languid indifference occupies the space in which we would otherwise develop a conception of ourselves, our self-worth, and of beings as a whole, i.e. the world.[60] In this form of boredom, Heidegger says, 'everything' is disclosed in such a way that it is 'of equally great and equally little worth:'

> This boredom *takes us precisely back to the point* where we do not in the first place seek out this or that being for ourselves in this particular situation; it takes us back to the point where all and everything appears indifferent to us.[61]

We ourselves belong to this totality that is now manifested as something boring and indifferent. Heidegger claims that 'what is individual about us ourselves and familiar to us' is part of what 'recedes' in profound boredom.[62] The version of 'being left empty' that we see in this third version of the mood consists in Dasein subjecting itself to beings' 'telling refusal of themselves as a whole.'[63] In this 'refusal' Dasein finds itself somehow 'left entirely in the lurch, not only not occupied with this or that being,' as was the case in the first form of boredom, 'not only left standing by [itself] in this or that respect,' as it was in the second, but 'left in the lurch' 'as a whole.'[64] In other words, the entire structure of existence, the entire situatedness of Dasein within the world, becomes conspicuous in its tenuousness.

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., p.138
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., pp.139-140

Heidegger thus begins to clarify the manner in which the nexus between Dasein and world manifests itself in profound boredom. Profound boredom exposes Dasein's standing in the midst of beings as a whole, i.e. the world, by revealing this connection in all its insecurity. Dasein's position in relation to world and fundamental drive towards the unconcealment of beings is disclosed insofar as, in these moments of boredom, these beings are refused:

> [T]hrough this boredom Dasein finds itself set in place precisely before beings as a whole, to the extent that in this boredom the beings that surround us offer us no further possibility of acting and no further possibility of our doing anything. There is a telling refusal on the part of beings as a whole with respect to these possibilities.[65]

This deep tension that Heidegger identifies between Dasein and world is brought out in the phrase 'telling refusal,' McNeill and Walker's translation of the German *Versagen*. This noun contains *sagen*, saying or telling, what Heidegger describes as 'making manifest.'[66] Hence *ver-sagen* is understood literally as 'mis-telling,' a telling that goes awry, a failure in 'making manifest.' What, precisely, is concealed in this refusal, i.e. what is *gesagt* in this *Versagen*? Nothing less, Heidegger says, than the 'very possibilities' of Dasein's 'doing and acting.'[67] The telling refusal is *especially* telling in this way because such a refusal on the part of beings presupposes their initial tendency towards articulation, towards unconcealment. Coextensively, this refusal illuminates the tendency of all beings in *physis* to conceal themselves, i.e. the drive towards articulation that is manifested, first and foremost, as self-concealment. The refusal of beings as a whole therefore exposes Dasein's essential capacity for and drive towards unconcealment; it makes this possibility known by refusing it. It also reveals the ambiguous self-refusal of beings that presupposes the possibility of their

[65] Ibid., p.139
[66] Ibid., §31b) p.140
[67] Ibid.

unconcealment, and the manner in which beings become all the more conspicuous in this refusal:

> This telling refusal does not speak about them, does not lead directly to dealings with them, but in its telling refusal it *points to them* and makes them known in refusing them.[68]

This idea thus transports us back to the opening of *FCM*, where Heidegger describes the ancient schema that prefaces the history of metaphysics, in which the figure of man is envisaged as a peculiar schism in the field of *physis*, an opening in nature enabled by the human's extraordinary capacity to freely 'speak out' about beings, disclosing them as what they are. This very idea is implicit in the refusal of beings that is now described as characteristic of profound boredom. Only if there is such a possibility of freely speaking out about beings – only if beings seek out articulation in the first instance – can there be an inhibition of this possibility. Precisely within this inhibition, the original possibility itself is revealed.

Knowledge of this capacity to 'speak out' is implicit in profound boredom, and it is up to us as prospective metaphysicians to render it explicit. Boredom appears to inhibit Dasein's initial capacity for speaking out about beings by blunting the ease and acuity with which Dasein discloses beings. If Dasein simply ignores this blunting affect, ignores the manner in which beings refuse themselves, it can continue to make utterances about beings. However, these utterances will be superficial and 'non-binding.'[69] Alternatively, if Dasein is willing to pay attention, Heidegger claims that it will be capable of glimpsing this original capacity for speaking out. The very realisation

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., §18c) p.75

of a *telling* refusal, a refusal *in* telling but also a refusal *that* tells, thus reveals a deeper possibility that edges us towards the threshold of metaphysics.

The route towards metaphysics from this realisation is not an easy one. The observation that 'telling refusal' implies an initial capacity for telling does not mean that, from within our deep torpor — the slack indifference that hangs over entities and the sense of emptiness in which we experience our solitude in relation to them – we will be able to reach this realisation of our distinct possibilities. On the contrary, Heidegger claims that we face a 'peculiar impoverishment which sets in with respect to ourselves in this 'it is boring for one,' which 'first *brings* the *self* in all its nakedness *to itself* as the self that *is there* and has taken over the being-there of its Da-sein.'[70] In profound boredom's 'telling refusal,' beings as a whole are disclosed to Dasein, but Dasein is not able to engage directly with them. As is the case with anxiety, this attunement leaves Dasein suspended in this disclosure without prescribing any particular action. Dasein glimpses the abyssal character of its bare existence, but without any means of managing it, i.e. of bringing it back to the level of everyday dealings with things. Dasein discovers itself in the midst of beings, and yet it 'can no longer bring itself to expect anything from beings as a whole in any respect, because there is not even anything enticing about beings any more.'[71] This absence of any 'enticement' is the result of Dasein's inability to 'go along with' beings, and this inability is due to the fact that the temporal horizon, which 'holds beings as a whole open and makes them accessible in general' also 'simultaneously [binds] Dasein to itself' and 'entrances' it.[72] The inertia that floods through the manifestation of beings in profound boredom thus also pervades Dasein, because

[70] Ibid., §31b) p.143
[71] Ibid., §32a) p.147
[72] Ibid. Note that this description provides further evidence that Heidegger is revising his analysis of attunement in *Being and Time* by providing a more detailed account of the precise way in which beings withdraw in fundamental attunements, revealing the bare structure of Dasein.

Dasein finds itself in the midst of these beings as one amongst them. Dasein is entranced (*bannen*) by the temporal horizon, and this entrancement corrupts any attempt at 'going along with' beings.[73] Though it is what first makes possible *any* accessibility of beings, in boredom the temporal horizon itself holds Dasein captive, transfixing it in such a way that beings no longer manifest themselves as wholly accessible:

> This attunement in which Dasein is everywhere and yet may be nowhere has its own peculiar feature of entrancement. *What entrances* is nothing other than the *temporal horizon*. Time entrances [*bannt*] Dasein, not as the time which has remained standing as distinct from flowing, but rather the *time beyond such flowing and its standing*, the time which in each case *Dasein itself as a whole* is. […] Entranced by time, Dasein cannot find its way to those beings that *announce* themselves in *the telling refusal of themselves* as a whole precisely within this horizon of entrancing time.[74]

We thus have an explanation for the 'impoverishment' that is found at the heart of this attunement, and of the difficulty of our task of moving in and through this attunement towards metaphysics. The temptation in the face of such a scenario is to withdraw from it by retreating into other disciplines. However, according to Heidegger there is much to be gained from sticking with our new awareness of this boredom and enduring it.

Heidegger argues that if we can bear to remain open to the seemingly paralysing effects of this mood, it will bring us to the brink of an extremity (*Spitze*), in which, through an awareness of a telling refusal, the radically temporal nature of our possibilities is exposed and we are '*impelled toward the originary making-possible of Dasein as such*.'[75] The telling refusal of beings as a whole reveals the 'expanse' of beings, insofar as it envelops all beings, as well as the 'extremity' of our own situatedness in the midst

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., §31b) p.144

of these beings, the extremity that is required to apprehend these beings as a whole whilst being one amongst them.[76]

b) Profound boredom and finitude: The moment of vision

Within profound boredom, the unity of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics is revealed. World and individuation attain a weighty conspicuousness in the first two forms of boredom, but not yet in an especially disturbing manner. It does not seem to be relevant or questionable, at these more superficial levels of boredom, how it is that we ourselves are tied to the entities that bore us; we are not compelled to confront the connection between world and individuation. In *profound* boredom, by contrast, we are struck by precisely this connection, by the extremity of Dasein's relation to world, a relation that has a singularly shattering trait: finitude.

There are two dimensions of the relation between profound boredom and finitude. The first concerns the way in which boredom subjects Dasein to the extreme temporality of its existence, i.e. the fact that it is a finite being and therefore at the mercy of time. When Heidegger claims that, in profound boredom, all beings 'withdraw,' this does not imply that here, in the present moment of boredom, all beings are refused. Rather, his claim is that all past, present and prospective beings simultaneously withdraw.[77] These three perspectives cannot be split off from one another and measured using clock time, because they are 'originarily' 'united in the horizon of time as such;' they make up the '*single* and *unitary universal horizon of time*' that 'entrances' Dasein in profound boredom.[78] This form of boredom, then, confronts Dasein with its primordial relation to time, i.e. its finitude. As Harman says, in profound boredom we 'manage to make

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., §32a) p.145
[78] Ibid.

contact with something essential: namely, we are explicitly confronted with our own Dasein, its possibilities, and our thrownness into the world. We are entranced by time, unable to escape it.'[79] This form of boredom conveys to Dasein its essential finitude by '[confronting] us with the total situation of our Dasein in the world.'[80]

Despite its efforts, in this entrancement Dasein struggles to re-establish its originary mode of engagement with beings. It thus has no other option than to 'leave this concealed entrancement its power.'[81] Though this situation appears desperate, it has the potential to bring Dasein face to face with its temporality, which means, ultimately, its finitude, its essence, its status as a meta-physical being. Dasein's finitude is what is 'told' in the 'telling refusal' of beings as a whole, since it is Dasein's boundedness to time that enables the self-refusal of beings, i.e. the ability of beings to '[hold] before Dasein as it were, as unexploited, the possibilities of its doing and acting in the midst of these beings.'[82] However, time, as that which holds Dasein captive in this entrancement, also 'announces' itself as the source of Dasein's potentiality for freedom.[83]

Because the entrancement contained in the depths of this attunement exposes the possibility of this freedom, but does not prescribe means for enacting it, the onus is on Dasein to free itself. However, this 'self-liberation,' Heidegger says, is only possible if Dasein '*resolutely discloses* [sich entschließt] itself *to itself*, i.e., discloses itself [*sich erschließt*] for itself as Da-sein.'[84] This amounts to a decision by Dasein to endure the 'extremity' of its own finite existence, its simultaneous openness to and slavishness to the horizon of time, which marshals all possible accessibility of beings.

[79] Harman, G. *Heidegger Explained* p88
[80] Ibid.
[81] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §32a) p.147
[82] Ibid., §32b) p148
[83] Ibid., p.149
[84] Ibid.

Heidegger argues that this endurance of Dasein's essential extremity, of the way in which time temporalizes its existence through and through, is itself illustrated in an 'instant' of time, a 'moment of vision' (*Augenblick*). This moment of vision is not to be understood as a period of measurable time, but rather as an exercise in which the being-there of Dasein is revealed to Dasein.[85] The 'present' that it designates is Dasein's becoming present to its own extremity, which is achieved when Dasein 'brings itself before itself' as an opening onto beings as a whole.[86] Thus, Beistegui says, 'the Moment is not linked to the disclosure of a particular situation but to the disclosure of situatedness as such.'[87] As a temporal phenomenon, boredom presents a special opportunity for resolutely disclosing the structure of Dasein's temporality. From within this attunement, Dasein is especially susceptible to being '*impelled into the extremity of that which properly makes possible*,' i.e. being 'impelled *through entrancing time into that time itself*, into its proper essence.'[88]

The second dimension of the relation between profound boredom and finitude is more complex. It concerns the exercise through which Dasein makes the move from entranced boredom to the moment of vision. Heidegger describes the process of the moment of vision, in which Dasein grasps the essence of time as a 'horizon of ecstases,' as a kind of 'rupture' (*Gebrochenheit*). This rupture, which directs Dasein towards time as the site of its own radical possibilities, is facilitated in a unique way in profound boredom:

> *Entranced in the expanse of the temporal horizon* and yet thereby *impelled into the extremity of the moment of vision* as that which properly makes possible, that which can announce itself as such only

[85] Heidegger, M. *Being and Time* §68a) p.388
[86] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §38b) p.165
[87] Beistegui, M. "Homo Prudens" in Raffoul, F. and Pettigrew, D. (eds) (2002) *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press p.124
[88] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §32b) p.149

> if it imposes itself compellingly as something possible – this is what occurs in such boredom.[89]

This rupturing moment of vision is 'announced' in the telling refusal of beings in which beings as a whole, i.e. 'world' is refused. As well as rendering explicit this concept of 'world,' the telling refusal highlights Dasein's individuation, its status as 'a Da-sein that in each case is as existing in the situation it has unreservedly seized upon, an existing which is always singular and unique.'[90] 'World' and 'individuation,' Heidegger argues, form an 'original unity,' a 'structural link' that 'manifests itself precisely in the fundamental attunement of profound boredom.'[91] Insofar as this unity always relates back to Dasein's own finite thrownness into the world, it is parasitic upon the concept of finitude. Finitude is thus revealed in profound boredom as a kind of medium through which world and individuation take shape. World is not refused in an isolated moment, rather *all* worldly beings, past present and future, withdraw. Likewise, Dasein does not experience its individuation as an isolated, abstract ego, but rather as this particular 'Da-sein' on its own singular trajectory, as a 'unique' stretching within time.[92] Taken together, these concepts demonstrate the conspicuousness of the finite, temporal character of existence.

Profound boredom thus brings Dasein to the brink of a realisation of its finite character, and the moment of vision constitutes the direct realisation of this character. The rupturing that occurs in the moment of vision, which is the second dimension of the relation between profound boredom and the fundamental concept of finitude, brings the

[89] Ibid., p.151
[90] Ibid., §39 p.169
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

finitude of Dasein to a moment of realisation. This rupturing occurs within the structure of Dasein itself:

> Is the essence of the unity and the structural linking of both terms [world and individuation] ultimately a *rupture?* What is the meaning of this *rupture within Dasein itself*? We call this the finitude of Dasein and ask: *What does finitude mean?* Only with this question have we attained the question that fully gains a purchase upon what it is that is trying to voice itself in that fundamental attunement. *Is it not the finitude of Dasein that resonates in the fundamental attunement of profound boredom and attunes us through and through?*[93]

Though finitude is the source of this rupture, and though world and individuation are already disclosed within profound boredom, the moment of vision facilitates a direct confrontation with these concepts in their deepest forms.

At the start of the lecture course, Heidegger says, the decision to question world, finitude and solitude appeared 'violent' and 'arbitrary.' It is now possible, he claims, to fully elucidate the role that these concepts are playing. They are not philosophical themes that have been selected at random from books, but are significant because they emerge from the fundamental attunement of profound boredom.[94] The '*elaboration of these questions*,' Heidegger says, 'is nothing other than an *accentuation of the possibility of that fundamental attunement*.'[95] Insofar as this attunement is grounded in the threefold ecstatic temporality of Dasein, these three questions will also be grounded in this temporality. To this extent, world, finitude and solitude are fundamental concepts of Dasein, ones that gradually become more explicit throughout the analysis of the three forms of boredom.

[93] Ibid., p.170
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., p.171

World, finitude and individuation: Three perennial metaphysical concepts

At the close of Part One of *FCM* we are left with world, finitude and individuation, three perennial metaphysical contexts, and three fundamental concepts of Dasein. We are also left with the 'burdensome' knowledge that Heidegger wishes us to accrue so that we can begin philosophising for ourselves, that is, knowledge of Dasein as a finite linkage to world and the solitude of its own status in relation to world.[96] The process of questioning this fundamental attunement, Heidegger says, has been one of '[liberating] the humanity in man,' of 'loading Dasein upon man as his ownmost burden.'[97] As long as we are prepared to take on this burden, we have maintained our trajectory on the journey towards metaphysics. We have accepted Heidegger's invitation to philosophise, withstood the temptation to try to flee from profound boredom, from finitude, from metaphysics in the direction of science or worldview. We have, according to Heidegger, managed to preserve our freedom. We can therefore continue on our journey, because, Heidegger says, 'only those who can truly give themselves a burden are free.'[98]

Heidegger claims that what is required now is a 'courage of mood [*Mut*],' a spiritedness and determination to arm ourselves with these three fundamental metaphysical contexts, and really begin to do metaphysics.[99] We have been left with the knowledge that Dasein's relation to world is singular and tenuous, Dasein *is* this relation, this finitude, this 'rupturing' in *physis*. We know now why it is that Dasein comes to do metaphysics via a fundamental attunement, i.e. only via a process of being 'gripped' by concepts. As finitude, as a rupturing, as a negativity, Dasein must hold fast to beings. We have become acquainted with the contemporary manifestation that this 'being gripped' has,

[96] Ibid., §38b) p.166
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., p.167

one of emptiness, absence, boredom in the face of our own existence. The effect of this attunement is to be understood, Heidegger says, in terms of 'lack,' 'deprivation,' and 'need,' all of which are evident in, and yet not understood by, the 'clamorous' intensity behind the proclamations of cultural psychology.[100] These proclamations attempt to remove the ambiguity and indeterminacy of Dasein's situation by crystallising the concept of a division between the human's earthly, sensible nature and the 'higher' faculty of its rationality. However, this very division does the worst damage; it propels man into the vortex of profound boredom. The concept of the life-spirit dichotomy attempts to distract from the sense of nullity and meaninglessness that shrouds human life, but it ends up pushing the human further away from knowledge of the essential absence, the primordial homesickness that structures its existence. Heidegger wants us to use his examination of the fundamental attunement of profound boredom to get us back to this knowledge; he wishes us to become gripped by the fact that we are essentially not gripped, rather than seeking shelter from this uncomfortable but essential knowledge by retreating behind the pronouncements of contemporary worldviews.

From its inception, this absence at the core of Dasein's understanding of itself stems from the creeping realisation, dormant in profound boredom, of the finitude and solitude of Dasein's relation to world. From within this knowledge, this 'deeper' response to our attunement than the one we witnessed in the *Kulturphilosophie* of Spengler et al., Heidegger now wishes to '*really* question what this fundamental attunement gives us to question,' to 'question concerning what *oppresses* us in this fundamental attunement,' to '*help bring to word* that which Dasein wishes to speak about in this fundamental attunement.'[101]

[100] Ibid., §38a) pp.162–163
[101] Ibid., §38b) p.167

Heidegger's critique of *Kulturphilosophie* in Part One was an examination of the 'outer expression' of the contemporary situation. This is then replaced by an exposition of the internal rumblings, the inner life of the fundamental attunement that determines it. The result of this dual-pronged analysis is that we now have an idea of what it is that contemporary Dasein wishes to 'speak about,' namely a realisation of the fundamental possibilities of Dasein that are implicit in the telling refusal of beings, and world, finitude and solitude as concepts that are shown to be 'essential' and philosophically powerful in this attunement. Having provided this metaphysical context, Heidegger hopes that we are now in a position to examine and understand the ways in which the concepts of world, finitude and individuation erupt in the contemporary epoch. We know that the 'worldview' approach is centred on the concepts of 'life' and 'spirit,' whereas the more profound response points us in the direction of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics. In an effort to fully elucidate and comprehend the deeper response to our fundamental attunement, Heidegger considers it necessary to first get to grips with its more superficial outer expression. We can only avoid responding to boredom by succumbing to the promises of cultural diagnosis if we can recognise the points at which the delusions of this response begin and end.

Chapter Five: Life and biology

From boredom to life

I have now begun to provide a picture of Heidegger's dual-pronged approach to boredom and the manner in which he hopes to engage us with it. Firstly, Heidegger examines the outer expression of boredom, i.e. the worldview that it announces, by examining the work of what he considers to be the four key 'spokespeople' of that worldview. Secondly, he conducts a phenomenology of the 'inner life' of boredom by looking at actual scenarios that bore us, and eventually shows how these culminate in a profound boredom that holds contemporary Dasein in its grip. This 'inner' exploration results in the emergence of the concepts of world, finitude and solitude from within the experience of boredom. The binary approach that Heidegger adopts here underscores the idea that these two 'faces' of boredom mark two distinct possibilities. From within boredom's grasp, we can either commit ourselves wholesale to 'worldview,' and allow ourselves to be seduced by the cultural motifs of Spengler et al., or we can pursue a deeper understanding of our situation by attending to the immediate phenomenological manifestation of the attunement and what it 'tells us.'[1] Seeking out the latter possibility means responding to the quietness of boredom not by becoming sedated by it, but by listening to it carefully, transforming its absence of energy and motivation into an opportunity to remain quiet ourselves, to 'wait' in anticipation of more profound concepts that will emerge from it, that is, those of world, finitude and solitude.[2]

Boredom thus has a spectrum of profundity. At the deepest end of the spectrum, we discover world, finitude and solitude as fundamental concepts of metaphysics and of

[1] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §31 p.139
[2] Ibid., §74 p.351

Dasein, and at the superficial end we find the 'handed down' and recycled concepts of life and spirit.[3] Heidegger envisages us as readers of his lectures to be situated somewhere in the middle: we can either go deeper into boredom, or we can simply float on its surface by subscribing to the 'exciting' prognostications of contemporary *Kulturphilosophie*.[4] Heidegger believes that our chances of taking the former route – of 'going deeper' and entering into a proper metaphysical engagement with ourselves and our situation – are far greater if we are able to recognise, comprehend and hence avoid the distractions and misapprehensions of the latter route. We therefore need to acquaint ourselves intimately with the deliverances of the more superficial end of the spectrum. This, however, is not the only reason that Heidegger wishes to spend time elaborating the 'uprooted,' callow contents of worldview and its application of the concepts of life and spirit. For Heidegger, a deeper understanding is concealed in the superficial interpretations of Spengler et al., albeit one that these thinkers remain unaware of. This deeper meaning pertains to the fact that the concepts of 'life' and 'spirit' that anchor their interpretations are in fact 'divergent,' 'unconnected' reconfigurations of the ancient division in Plato's Academy between *physis* and *ēthos*.[5]

I have already indicated in chapter two that, for Heidegger, the 'scholastic splitting' between *physis* and *ēthos* amounts to a way of interpreting and ordering the human's singular relationship to *physis*, the way in which, as a result of its endowment of *logos*, the human 'speaks out' about the totality of beings whilst belonging to this very totality. Though the Presocratics existed in an enlightened awareness of man's reciprocal relationship to *physis*, and did not circumscribe man in a distinct region of beings that levitates above the rest of nature, post-Plato and the establishment of schools, the

[3] Ibid., §18a) p.71
[4] Ibid., §18c) p.75
[5] Ibid., §10 p.35

concept of man and all of his activities are subsumed under the title *ēthos*, a term that is seen as directly opposed to *physis*.[6] I revealed in chapter three that Heidegger credits Nietzsche with capturing the more primordial sense of man's relationship to *physis* through his interpretation of the concepts of the 'Dionysian' and the 'Apollonian.' Nietzsche, Heidegger says, correctly envisages these two forces not as properties of man but as his most 'fundamental orientations.'[7] Heidegger describes Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian as a blend of cruelty and exuberance, as the source of all growth, creativity and destruction. Meanwhile the Apollonian, the 'urge for everything that simplifies,' which, according to Nietzsche, has been dominant in Western culture since the Presocratics, exerts a tempering, ordering force, one that is implicit in Heidegger's account in his *Preliminary Appraisal* of the antiquated separation and organisation of scholarly disciplines.[8] The result of this force, which aims to render all things 'strong, clear, unambiguous and typical,' means that knowledge of what Heidegger terms the 'perilousness' of man's situation is repeatedly disarticulated and watered down.[9] If ancient philosophical thinking occurs in full awareness of the Novalisian 'homesickness' in which it is embedded, the trajectory of Western thinking that has persisted ever since has been a process of domestication, an attempt to remove the painful sense of contingency and indeterminacy that comes with awareness of this essential homesickness.

Despite their derivative character, the instalment of the concepts of life and spirit in contemporary *Kulturphilosophie* amounts to a pale imitation of this deeper understanding and its articulation by Nietzsche. Even though these concepts belong to

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., §18a) p.71
[8] Nietzsche, F. cited in Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18a) p.73; Ibid., §10 p.35
[9] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18b) p.73; §6b) β) p.19

interpretations that are 'borrowed second- and third-hand,' we can see that they are borrowed from something significant, that they are superficial only in comparison to something deeper.[10] In Part Two of the lecture course, Heidegger's principal goal is to look in more detail at the life-spirit opposition in contemporary thought, firstly in order to acquaint us further with the way in which it disarranges and distorts the ancient, more primordial conception of man and his relationship to *physis,* and secondly in order to begin to retrieve this deeper understanding of man from it. As far as Heidegger is concerned, his brief appraisal of the content of contemporary *Kulturphilosophie* in Part One only began to pursue this goal.

Aside from worldview and *Kulturphilosophie*, there is another, thus far unexplored face of the deceptions of contemporary metaphysics, one that Heidegger hints at in his *Preliminary Appraisal.* Heidegger claims here that metaphysics tends to posture as both science and worldview, despite the fact that it is neither of these.[11] Having looked at the 'worldview' side of this dichotomy in his analysis of *Kulturphilosophie* in Part One, Heidegger now wishes to explore aspects of the 'science' side in Part Two. Specifically, Heidegger opts for a lengthy examination of the life sciences. This decision, I will argue, comes about as a result of Heidegger's overall aim to identify the lineage that runs from the ancient conception of man's status within *physis*, through the *physis-ēthos* division in Plato's Academy, into modern articulations of the life-spirit opposition. Heidegger continues to pursue this aim in Part Two by exploring the discipline that explicitly seeks to examine one side of the life-spirit divide: biology, and what the landscape of this discipline looks like in the contemporary situation.

[10] Ibid., §18a) p.71
[11] Ibid., §1a) p.1

If we pick up *FCM* and turn straight to Heidegger's analysis of biology without taking into account this metaphysical context that prefaces it, Heidegger's examination of the life sciences will look random and distinctly un-Heideggerian. Heidegger will appear, in these passages, to be adopting a novel range of interests based around biology, zoology and ethology, which leads him to uncharacteristically speculate on the behaviour of lizards, bees, woodpeckers and infusoria, and to frame his discussion within a hierarchical understanding of life. This is certainly what disturbs the commentators that I discussed in chapter one, who interpret these sections of the lectures as an endorsement of an evaluative ontology of life. However, having looked in detail in the previous three chapters at the material that introduces the discussion of biology in Part Two, I now wish to argue that it no longer seems so outrageous that Heidegger provides a summary of the contents of life science research in a way that expresses blatant metaphysical prejudices. As I have begun to demonstrate, and will continue to do so, the thrust of Heidegger's message in *FCM*, as in many other places in his corpus, is that we must first understand the delusions of thinking, and how we ourselves came to be deluded, in order to retrieve and rearticulate more essential knowledge.

It is worth noting that in pursuit of this goal of discovering something essential from out of the ravages of the contemporary situation, Heidegger spends far longer looking at biology than *Kulturphilosophie*. This is because, somewhat ironically perhaps, Heidegger considers the ontic science research that he examines in Part Two to be more metaphysically fruitful than the latter, ostensibly explicitly philosophical discipline. Though biology never manages to break free from the conceptual confines of its field, it does unwittingly reveal something significant about our situation. For through its examination of life as a category of beings, biology explores the idea that different

types of living entity experience 'world' in different ways. Heidegger is not suggesting that biology hits upon the concept of world *qua* fundamental concept of metaphysics, but rather that, in its own vocabulary and using its own methodologies, the more profound biology of the time uses the concept of world to mark points of differentiation between organisms. In so doing biology provides an indication of the limitations of the concept of life, and of the point at which a distinct concept, spirit, takes over. By examining biology and, in particular, its use of the concept of 'world,' Heidegger believes that we can develop our knowledge of the ways in which, in the contemporary epoch, ancient metaphysical knowledge is distorted and replaced by the modern concepts of life and spirit. By appraising the contemporary application of these concepts, Heidegger hopes that we will have a far greater chance of circumnavigating their pitfalls in order to recover a deeper metaphysical understanding.

I therefore wish to claim that what looks, at first, like a somewhat unsophisticated attempt by Heidegger to turn his hand to theoretical biology and comparative zoology, is in fact a sideshow in the wider metaphysical project of *FCM*. Heidegger wishes to use these sections to uncover a series of metaphysical biases and presuppositions concerning life and spirit that arise within the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. It is as a result of this agenda that Heidegger presents his three controversial theses. We can recall that Heidegger posits these theses at the opening of his engagement with biology in Part Two. The stone, Heidegger says, is 'worldless,' the animal is 'poor in world' and man is 'world-forming.'[12] These theses are intended to guide us into a discussion of biology that will reveal the metaphysics implicit within it. In positing these theses, Heidegger is attempting to bracket the knowledge of profound boredom that has been gained in Part One in order to appraise the more basic

[12] Ibid., §42 p.177

'anthropological' attitude that he takes to be a standard of contemporary thinking, an attitude that is embodied in the work of Spengler, Scheler, Klages and Ziegler. When Heidegger claims at the opening of Part Two that he will 'crudely' distinguish man as a 'world-forming' being from the 'world-poor' animal and the 'worldless' stone, he is attempting to render explicit the metaphysics that, he believes, inheres in this fundamentally anthropological attitude, and to show how this comparative analysis, which is founded on the life-spirit distinction, suffuses contemporary biology as a discipline that is concerned with one side of this divide.[13] Heidegger wishes to demonstrate, in keeping with his earlier claims that a tendency towards compartmentalisation and stratification belongs to the history of metaphysics, that if we look closely at the contemporary version of this compartmentalisation and stratification, we discover the fundamental divisions that he identifies in his three theses.

In order to substantiate this claim that contemporary biology, like *Kulturphilosophie*, is thoroughly symptomatic of the fundamental attunement of profound boredom insofar as, like the 'anthropological' formulations of worldview in *Kulturphilosophie*, biology propagates a range of prejudices concerning the life-spirit divide, Heidegger immediately begins to read his three theses into the findings of biology.

Mechanism, vitalism, and the "pre-paradigm" period in early twentieth century biology

We can recall that Krell et al. take issue with Heidegger for exhibiting a somewhat confused relationship to biology. Heidegger, according to these discussants, dedicates a good deal of space to analysing the findings of biology, but ultimately flouts its results by denying any profound kinship between the human and nonhuman animals. Derrida

[13] Ibid.

remarks that Heidegger 'presupposes […] that there is one thing, one domain, one homogeneous type of entity, which is called animality *in general*, for which any example would do the job.'[14] Calarco raises a similar objection, claiming that, upon reading Heidegger's three theses, we cannot ignore the fact that no zoologist would ever be 'willing to make statements about the world-relations of animals *as such* when such structures have yet to be investigated empirically in most animal species.'[15] However, bracketing for a moment my argument that Heidegger is only formulating his interaction with biology as part of a broader philosophical agenda, if we look directly at the biology to which Heidegger is responding, we find that it is largely based on an examination of precisely the kind of 'structures,' i.e. world-relations, that Calarco refers to, which are investigated from the unicellular organisms upwards.

In contemporary biology Heidegger sees a plethora of suppositions and approaches that provide evidence of an underlying fundamental attunement, one that is articulated, in contemporary thought, in terms of the division between life and spirit. This metaphysical context sheds an interesting light on the interpretations of Krell et al. An important point to note in this regard is that the Krellian reading does not examine the metaphysical commitments of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century biology that interests Heidegger. If we read the discussion of biology in the wake of Part One of the lecture course, we are ready to interpret the biological material that Heidegger presents here in the way that he intends us to, that is, as a raft on the metaphysical ocean of profound boredom, entirely at the mercy of the prejudices contained in the more superficial 'science-worldview' response to the attunement. By circumventing most of what Heidegger says in Part One, Krell et al. assume that Heidegger is using and

[14] Derrida, J. (1989) *Of Sprit: Heidegger and the Question* p.57
[15] Calarco, M. (2008) *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* p.27

abusing biology to shore up his own metaphysical claims. However, the situation is in fact the reverse. Heidegger claims that he will trace the conceptual shifts that have recently occurred in biology partly in order to demonstrate that he is *not* providing his own 'private opinions,' i.e. his own ontology of life.[16] He wishes to elucidate the metaphysics implicit in biology so that he can show that it is continuous with the contemporary situation as he depicts it, and can further expose the dangerous metaphysical biases that grip the age.

Before examining Heidegger's most decisive claims about biology in detail, I wish to give a general impression of the climate of the biology of his time, both from Heidegger's perspective, and by looking independently at some of its key theories. In so doing, I wish to argue that during this period in its history, biology was a singularly ambiguous science that did indeed exploit the metaphysical conceptions and divisions that Heidegger ascribes to it. In order to appreciate the tenuousness and speculativeness of this phase of biology we need only note that it comes decades prior to the discovery of the biochemical structure of DNA and the subsequent molecularization of the concept of life. This epistemic insecurity brought biology into a natural engagement with philosophy. Some of the most important biologists of this period, including Karl Ernst von Baer and Jakob von Uexküll, were heavily influenced by German idealism and ancient ontology, and were often critical of the protagonists of their own field of research. For example, von Baer and Uexküll were deeply sceptical of the idea that Darwinism provides an exhaustive account of life, and general disagreement concerning the nature of life and organismic development was widespread.[17] It was therefore not

[16] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.261

[17] See Uexküll, J. (1926) *Theoretical Biology* trans. Mackinnon, D.L. London: Kegan Paul; Von Baer, K. (2012) "Über Darwins Lehre," in *Reden gehalten in wissenschaftlichen Versammlungen und kleinere Aufsätze vermischten Inhalts Vol. II* Ulan Press; Lenoir, T. (1982) *The Strategy of Life: Teleology and*

the case that biology in the early twentieth century was producing a single, flat ontology, a genetic continuum that contains all entities including the human. Biology during this period was not a unified matrix of concepts ready to be simultaneously exploited and misconstrued by Heidegger in the way that the Krellian reading envisions.

Heidegger's observations come at a particularly turbulent point in the history of biology. For decades, biology had oscillated between radically opposed mechanistic and vitalistic conceptions of the organism. The mechanistic model, founded on Newtonian physics, is based, Heidegger says, on the supposition that 'we can build up the organism through recourse to its elementary constituents without first having grasped the building plan, i.e., the essence of the organism, in its fundamental structure and without keeping this structure in view as that which guides the construction.'[18] Eighteenth century vitalism, far from providing a solution to the enigma of life, never allowed the problem to arise, and instead posited a vital force in order to attempt to explain the self-organising character of the organism.[19] The radical nature of the distinction between these two conceptions of life led to extreme disagreement between the major biologists of the period. On one side of the debate, Driesch and Uexküll sought to challenge the prevailing model of evolutionary biology, which had since developed into what they saw as a dangerously reductive Darwinist materialism. Meanwhile, exponents of this drive towards mechanism, most notably Jaques Loeb and Wilhelm Roux, aimed to render biology as epistemically secure and rigorous as physics and chemistry. They

Mechanics in Nineteenth-Century German Biology Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press Chapter 6.

[18] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61a) p.260

[19] Ibid., §53 p.223

therefore opposed the more holistic depiction of life, which they saw as 'largely descriptive' and 'speculative' rather than experimental and rigorous.[20]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the climate of biological research was predominantly mechanistic. Heidegger claims that in the midst of this tendency towards mechanism, a cohort of life science researchers had recently begun to defend biology against the 'tyranny' of the mechanical, physico-chemical model of life by 'attempting to restore autonomy to "life," as the *specific manner of being pertaining to animal and plant*, and to secure this autonomy for it.'[21] Heidegger claims that the need for biology to assert itself as a singular discipline with its own peculiar subject matter stemmed from the dominant character of the mechanistic model of the organism. Natural selection had proposed an account of life that placed all living beings, including man, into a calculable biological continuum of increasing complexity, but had not managed to dissolve the aged disagreement between these two theories of organismic development. The field of biology at this stage in history exemplifies what Thomas Kuhn terms the 'pre-paradigm' period in scientific research, which is 'marked by frequent and deep debates over legitimate methods, problems and standards of solution.'[22] Kuhn states that Darwin's discovery of evolution by natural selection is an instance of a 'major revolution' in science, but post-Darwinian research was still permeated with deep struggles concerning methodology.[23] To the extent that these struggles ultimately pertained to profound metaphysical problems, they were not simply

[20] Allen, G.E. (2005) "Mechanism, vitalism and organicism in late nineteenth and twentieth-century biology: the importance of historical context" *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* Vol. 36, pp.261-283; pp.262-3
[21] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §45b) p.188
[22] Kuhn, T. (1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press p.48
[23] Ibid., p.180

matters for 'puzzle solving,' in the Kuhnian sense.[24] Kuhn argues that 'one of the things a scientific community acquires with a new paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that, while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be assumed to have solutions.'[25] During this period of life science research in Germany, disagreement arose over the very nature of this criterion, because there was no decisive, fixed conception regarding how living organisms should be defined. Every aspect of research, from delimiting the phenomena under investigation to the role of the scientist and of science itself was therefore intrinsically confused.

This pervasive confusion in contemporary biology takes us back once again to Heidegger's claims at the beginning of *FCM* concerning the general disaggregation of knowledge that takes place in the wake of Plato and Aristotle. Heidegger claims that the history that subsequently unfolds is one in which the ontic sciences, as well as philosophy, are forced to cope with the many 'divergent elements' of knowledge that are continually 'splitting apart.'[26] Contemporary biology, which, since the days of Aristotle, has subdivided into such fields as zoology, botany, anatomy and ecology, provides an example of this struggle. Faced with this confusing fragmentation, the two core categories of 'life' and 'spirit,' reconfigurations of the older concepts of *physis* and *ēthos*, are seized upon and ossified. Heidegger's aim, in his interpretation of early-twentieth century biology, is to capture the current stage of this process of ossification for the purpose of reversing it, of taking us back to the antiquated philosophical understanding of *physis* and our relationship to it.

[24] For Kuhn, puzzles are 'that special category of problems that can serve to test ingenuity or skill in solution' (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* p.36). As such, puzzles are always considered to have a solution, otherwise they are not puzzles but 'problems' (Ibid., p.36-37).
[25] Ibid., p.37
[26] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §10 p.35

Heidegger's interpretation of early-twentieth century biology

Because he wishes to simply observe the metaphysical struggle contained in the mechanism-vitalism debate, Heidegger does not provide his own recommendations for a conception of the organism that will affirm, reject, or synthesise the prevailing models. It is crucial to bear in mind that Heidegger is using his three 'guiding theses' on the distinct world-relations of different beings in order to reveal the contemporary manner in which metaphysics separates and classifies entities. Having established this general context for his discussion, Heidegger goes on to demonstrate how the struggle between mechanism and vitalism arises as a result of the emergence of a metaphysical concept on the basis of which living beings are thought to differ. This is the concept of the 'world' of the organism. The concept arises most explicitly in Uexküll's work, in which, Heidegger claims, it is developed into an understanding of the comparative poverty of the organism's world.[27] Though this concept of the world of the organism is unexplored in mechanism and vitalism, both positions presuppose that the organism is open to something other than it, something beyond the brute materiality of its physical form. Despite the fact that mechanism does not endorse any such conception of openness, and vitalism quickly paints over it using the idea of a vital force that emerges from within the individual organism, the concept of this openness to something beyond the organism – this capability for producing organs that interact with an otherness, i.e. the environment or world that it occupies and which produces stimuli that it can respond to – lays the groundwork for Uexküll's *Umwelt* theory, which renders the concept of the animal world explicit.

[27] Ibid., §61 p.264. I will reveal how this Uexküllian account of the organism relates to the concept of poverty specifically in the following section where I will examine Heidegger's reading of Uexküll in more detail.

Insofar as it is committed to defining the organism as a machine-like entity — an aggregation of pieces of equipment that produce an outcome – the mechanistic conception of life would not admit of the explanatory importance or even existence of the 'world' of the organism. *Prima facie* this seems perfectly reasonable, because we would not, Heidegger argues, endow the item of equipment with its own plasticity, its own form of openness to a world. For example, the hammer, Heidegger says, is 'ready for hammering,' but we would not describe the being of the hammer as an independent '*urge toward* hammering.'[28] This is because equipment does not have any kind of independent relationship to a world outside of its manifold of assignment relations. If the organism is nothing more than a bundle of pieces of equipment, it will surely be likewise worldless. However, despite this denial of a world to the organism, Heidegger considers the mechanistic conception to be implicitly committed to the idea that the organism, *unlike* the machine, does indeed exhibit its own independent relationship to a world.

When we consider the fact that the organism is independently capable of renewing, regulating and reproducing itself in accordance with pressures from its environment, the organism-machine analogy begins to break down.[29] Mechanistic explanations do not capture the inner drive of the organism, the fact that it is not only susceptible to the effects of its environment, but that it is capable of having an effect *on* its environment. Unlike the organism, the '*ready-made piece of equipment*' is entirely lacking in independent capacities for self-renewal, regulation or reproduction.[30] It remains 'subject to some implicit or explicit *prescription* with respect to its possible use. This prescription is not given by the readiness of the equipment, but is always derived from

[28] Ibid., §53 p.226
[29] Ibid., p.223
[30] Ibid., §54 p.228

the plan which has already determined the production of the equipment and its specific equipmental character.'[31] Even if the organism could be understood as a complex of implements, it must be treated as an entity that responds to a prescriber of assignment relations, some kind of central agent or extrinsic governing plan. Its external natural environment must serve as the manager and maintainer of its various capacities, just as the piece of equipment is managed and maintained by its user. The mechanistic conception thus unintentionally ascribes a world-relation to the animal as an entity whose organs are open to direction, despite the fact that this idea clashes entirely with the principles of mechanism and is far more akin to the vitalistic, entelecheic explanation for organismic function.

Both mechanism and vitalism thus implicitly presuppose one irreducible fact about the organism: that it is open to something that goes beyond the constituents of its material form. According to this presupposition, the presence of which would, as we have seen, be vehemently denied by proponents of mechanism, 'life' denotes a singular class of entities that cannot be understood using the categories used to describe inert matter. A metaphysical distinction between the inanimate and the animate therefore begins to creep into biology. When we examine the metaphysics that is implicit here, we find that inert matter, along with the item of equipment divorced from its maker or user, is thought to lack capacities for self-regulation, self-renewal and self-production. Inert matter possesses no capacities whatsoever, it does not have any kind of opening onto a world. It is on this basis that the stone is described in Heidegger's comparative examination as 'worldless.'[32] Though Heidegger says comparatively little about the stone's world-relation, he believes that this concept of the worldlessness of inanimate

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., §42 p.177

matter provides biology with a crucial contrast case to the active, labile world-relation that circumscribes animality.

Heidegger argues that the singularity of the organism's world-relation has been shown by the more profound biology of the age to consist in the organism's interior ability to adapt its form according to the dictates of its environment. Though vitalism is more responsive to the idea of a set of capacities that distinguish animate from inanimate beings, Heidegger claims that vitalism simply 'eliminates the problem, i.e., it no longer allows one to arise.'[33] It is not until Uexküll's pioneering *Umwelt* research that we see a deeper articulation of the relation between the organism's capacities and its external world. This research, according to Heidegger, marks the point at which biology has the freest and most transparent relationship to its metaphysical prejudices concerning life.

Heidegger wishes to reveal the conceptual heritage of Uexküll's research by going right back to basics and undergoing a lengthy examination of the concept that unites all biological theories of the time: that of the 'organism.' Heidegger claims that according to both mechanism and vitalism 'everything that lives is an *organism*.'[34] It is the organism, and not the cell, or aggregate of cells, that is the most significant category in biology. This means that 'the concept of a "living substance," a vital mass or "life-stuff," is a meaningless one. For the idea of "stuff" or "substance" in this sense specifically denies the character of the living being as an organism. The living being is always an organism. Its organismic character is what determines the unity of this particular living being in each case.' [35] According to biology, Heidegger says, the category 'organism' includes all entities that '[possess] organs.'[36] What, then, does

[33] Ibid., §53 p.223
[34] Ibid., §51a) p.212
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p.213

biology consider an organ to be? Heidegger claims that if we examine the history of the term 'organ,' we will be able to discover more about the way in which biology interprets the concept of 'life,' and how disagreement over the term leads to the contemporary battle between mechanism and vitalism.

The term 'organ,' Heidegger says, has its roots in the Greek word *οργανον* which means 'instrument,' and *εργον* which means 'work.'[37] This etymology defines the organ in advance of all distinct biological theories as a 'working instrument.'[38] Heidegger claims that Wilhelm Roux, taking this definition as a point of departure, defines the organism as a 'complex of instruments.'[39] This 'instrumental' interpretation of the organism, Heidegger says, raises important questions which Roux himself overlooks: How, based on this definition, are we to distinguish the organism from the machine? Does the definition designate the genuine essence of the organism? It appears to place organisms in precisely the same category as non-living systems and so fails to tell us anything specific about life. For Heidegger, Roux's conception of the organism as a series of instruments covers over the question of the important correlations and distinctions between various kinds of being: the being of instruments, of machines, of material things, and of the organ and organism.[40] Heidegger wishes to clarify the ontological connections and distinctions that are overlooked here.

All equipmental items including vehicles, machines and instruments, Heidegger says, are products of human activity. This poses an immediate problem for the definition of the organ as an instrument, because the organism, unlike an item of equipment, is not the result of human action. Heidegger examines a series of examples in order to clarify

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

the ontological difference between the organ and the piece of equipment, focussing in particular on the distinct ways in which instruments and organs serve a 'purpose' with respect to the structure that they belong to. Using the example of a pen, Heidegger then identifies a further distinction between a piece of equipment and a machine. The pen is not a machine designed to produce writing, it is a piece of equipment *for* writing. This basic distinction appears to destabilise Roux's definition of the organism:

> [A] machine is not identical with an instrument, nor is an instrument identical with a piece of equipment. Consequently, it is already impossible to understand the machine as a complex of instruments or as a complicated kind of instrument. And if the organism is as different from a machine as the machine is from a piece of equipment, then the definition of the organism as a complex of instruments must certainly collapse altogether.[41]

Mechanism treats the organ instrumentally as something that is serviceable for a particular purpose, in the same way that the pen is serviceable for writing.[42] The eye, for example, is thus 'for seeing' just as the pen is 'for writing.' The eye is part of a dynamic of cause and effect: it is a 'means' to the 'end' of vision. Heidegger claims that this means-end conception of the organism is so pervasive and familiar that it is rarely called into question within biology. However, when the *ontological* character of the eye is compared with that of the pen, we can see that this conception is fundamentally problematic. When we question which features essentially distinguish the organ from the item of equipment, we arrive at the concept of motility. As an essentially motile entity, the organ is capable of self-production, self-regulation and self-renewal.[43] Is there any possibility of this vital motility being explained mechanically, in terms of instrumentality?

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[41] Ibid., pp.214-5
[42] Ibid., p.215
[43] Ibid., §53 p.223

Heidegger claims that Driesch addresses this question, and concludes that the mechanistic conception of the organism has no resources for explaining the vital motility belonging to organs and to the organism as a whole. The mechanistic idea that the eye is 'for seeing' fails to acknowledge that, unlike the pen, the eye is not productive of something *external* to it.[44] When considered in this way, it appears that the eye may have nothing whatsoever in common with the pen. Alternatively, this apparent distinction may indicate that the eye simply has a different kind of instrumentality to that of the pen, an instrumentality that is internal to the organ rather than productive of some external effect. Is the decisive realisation for biology therefore that organs produce the capacities that they are endowed with? Is it the case, Heidegger asks, that 'the eye produces the retina and along with it what is visible and seen?'[45] This idea prompts a further question for Heidegger, one that points towards the core of the ontological comparison between organs and equipment: '*Can the animal see because it has eyes, or does it have eyes because it can see?*'[46] In other words, what is it that provides the condition for the possibility of the animal's possession of eyes? Heidegger claims that, in line with the Aristotelian tradition that is evident in the more metaphysically profound biology of the time, the animal has eyes because it can see. But having eyes is not equivalent to the ability to see: 'It is the *potentiality for seeing* which first makes the possession of eyes possible, makes the possession of eyes necessary in a specific way.'[47] This making-possible the possession of eyes does constitute a kind of serviceability, and it is 'on the basis of *this* serviceability that the

[44] Ibid., §52 p.218
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

organ comes into its closest proximity to equipment, to an instrument in general, and is usually identified with it.'[48]

First and foremost, the serviceability of the pen differs from the serviceability of the eye because the pen, unlike the eye, is an '*independent* being, something that is to hand for use by *various different* human beings.'[49] The eye does not possess this kind of equipmental independence. Eyes, and organs generally, are 'not present at hand independently of the way in which an object of use or a piece of equipment is present, for they are incorporated into the being that makes use of them.'[50] The organ cannot be split off from the organism and at the same time retain its mode of being as an organ. It is irreducibly integrated into the structure of the organism as a whole. Heidegger believes that, in recent times, this realisation is most clearly articulated by Uexküll.[51] In his 1926 work *Theoretical Biology*, Uexküll claims the following:

> There is no morphology of implements as there is of organisms; this is partly explained by the fact that implements are not constructed, as organisms are, from similar primary elements, and consequently are not derivable from shiftings, in accordance with law, of the same primordial mosaic.[52]

This disanalogy, for Heidegger, furnishes biology with the crucial realisation that the kind of serviceability we observe in the organ is other than that exhibited in the case of the piece of equipment. The pen produces writing, and is thus only 'complete' when it has provided this service. As a complete piece of equipment, the pen possesses a particular 'readiness' which renders it suitable for use.[53] Upon close examination this quality of 'being ready' cannot, Heidegger says, be equal to the labile and independent

[48] Ibid., p.219
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., §61b) p.263
[52] Uexküll, J. *Theoretical Biology* p.187
[53] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §52 p.220

'capability' possessed by the organ. The pen is essentially an inert object: it has no capability for writing in and of itself. The eye, by contrast, intrinsically possesses the capacity for seeing, and this capacity is not detachable from the rest of the organism. If it is isolated from the organism, it is no longer an eye at all.[54] Taken by itself, Heidegger says, the eye is unable to see, because its capacity for vision ultimately belongs to, and develops out of, the whole organism. It is the *organism* as a manifold of interdependent capacities, rather than the eye taken by itself, that is capable of seeing.[55] The organ is serviceable with respect to a possibility for seeing which belongs to the whole organism, and it is in this manner that the capacity emerges out of the organism as a whole. This sense of capacity is distinct from the equipmental mode of serviceability as readiness. The implication of this distinction is that the organ cannot be regarded as something discrete and manipulable. The organism must be grasped as a motile entity that is responsive to the possibilities of the entire organism, which is in turn connected to a surrounding environmental world, and cannot be treated as a static, isolable instrument.

For Heidegger, the important distinction that is emerging in his analysis of the implicit conceptual suppositions of contemporary biology is this one between *readiness* and *capacity*, for this distinction illuminates the deep conceptual problems that underlie the mechanism-vitalism clash and, at the same time, illuminate biology's fundamental assumptions concerning the difference between the living and the non-living. Capacity, Heidegger claims, is not distinguishable from readiness simply on the grounds that, unlike readiness, it expresses a particular type of potentiality.[56] Rather, '*being capable* and *being ready for…* announce a *fundamentally different manner of being* in each

[54] Ibid., p.221
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., §53 p.222

case.'[57] What precisely is the relation between the physical organ and the capacity? Heidegger claims that, according to an important discovery made principally by Uexküll, the capacities of the organism are thought to be given expression through its various organs. The organism's capacities are understood in this sense as capable of producing the organs.[58]

An explanation for this production of organs via capacities can be sought, Heidegger says, in the concept of 'drive' (*Trieb*). Whereas the readiness of the piece of equipment is always dependent on a 'prescription' concerning its 'proper use,' the development of capacities, by contrast, is 'driven' by the organism itself.[59] Having claimed that equipment is always experienced within a context of involvements, and that its readiness is always dependent upon a 'prescription' – whether explicit or implicit – regarding its 'possible use,' Heidegger now wants to emphasise that capacity, by contrast, is inherently self-regulating:

> [The organism] *drives itself toward its own capability for…* This self-driving and being driven toward its wherefore is only possible in that which is capable inasmuch as capability is in general *instinctually driven* [triebhaft]. Capacity is only to be found where there is drive.[60]

Whereas equipmental readiness reaches its completion in being used with respect to its serviceability, drive is always a striving out toward the possibilities of the organism's various capacities. As such, the organ is *subservient* to its capacities, but this subservience is not of the order of the present at hand 'serviceability for…' which characterises equipment.[61] The self-regulatory capacity of the organism is a capacity to maintain a degree of plasticity in relation to its environment and to its own organisation.

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., §57 p.235
[59] Ibid., §54 p.228
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., §55 p.230

It is thus 'a structure of instinctually organised anticipatory responses in each case which prescribes the sequence of movements that arises as soon as the capacity comes into play. In its specific being, the capacity in its self-driving movement has always already *anticipated* its possible range of achievement.'[62]

The significance of this point is likely to be lost in the vast torrent of information Heidegger presents on modern interpretations of the organism, but I would like to stress its importance in the remainder of this section. Heidegger's discussion of the organism culminates in this observation: that the organism's various capacities discern how and when they should develop in order to preserve the life of the organism. Heidegger describes this idea as a significant breakthrough in biology, one that he is attempting to capture and emphasise when he describes the organism as confined to an 'encircling ring' (*Umring*).[63] According to this concept, the organism only ever acts in accordance with the 'already anticipated' possibilities opened up by its particular set of capacities, which, in turn, are activated by stimuli from within its environment. This discovery marks a total rejection of mechanism, because it is entirely incompatible with the idea that the organism taken as a whole could be understood along the same lines as the functioning of a machine:

> The machine not only requires a builder in order to be a machine at all, it also has to be operated. The machine cannot stop or change its operation by itself, whereas the organism initiates, regulates and changes its own motility. Finally, if the machine is damaged, for example, then it requires repair or maintenance by others, and this can only be done by the specific manner of being belonging to be a being which is also capable of producing a machine. The organism, on the other hand, repairs and renews itself within certain limits. *Self-production* in general, *self-regulation* and *self-renewal* are obviously aspects which characterise the organism over against the machine and

[62] Ibid., §54 p.229
[63] Ibid., §61b) p.263

> which also illuminate the peculiar ways in which its capacity and capability as an organism are directed.[64]

Implicit in the discovery that capacities 'articulate' organs according to the needs presented by the environment is the idea that the animal is open to something other than it, i.e. the range of possibilities that are illuminated within its environment. The implication here is that the animal inhabits a kind of 'world.' This idea has far greater explanatory power than both mechanism and vitalism. The failure in these positions to deal with what it means for the organism to be open to its environment accounts for their inability, from Heidegger's perspective, to provide an interesting interpretation of the essence of the organism.

Heidegger argues that, thanks to his recognition of the explanatory importance of the concept of 'world' in biology, Uexküll provides a far more illuminating angle when it comes to dealing with the vital motility of organisms. Uexküll goes further than both mechanism and vitalism in his realisation that the organism can only be understood in relation to its environmental world. In order to illustrate this more profound angle, Heidegger cites Uexküll's example of the way in which protozoa navigate their environments. This simple life form gains nourishment by absorbing and then dispelling particles that are taken in via its cell membrane. For this purpose the protozoon possesses 'an aperture which first becomes a mouth, then a stomach, then an intestine and finally an anal tract.'[65] Despite its absence of a complex system of organs, the protozoon, according to Uexküll, provides an ideal example of the definitive traits of all organisms because it demonstrates the necessity of constant interaction with an environment. Heidegger claims that Uexküll's example of the functioning of this

[64] Ibid., §53 p.222
[65] Ibid., p.224

polymorphous organism indicates a deep understanding of the distinction between 'capacity' and 'readiness,' and hence the weaknesses of the organ-implement and organism-machine analogies as well as the significance of the idea of the 'surrounding world' of the animal. Human implements, Uexküll says, insofar as they are created by a maker external to them, exhibit a 'centripetal architecture' as opposed to the 'centrifugal architecture' of organisms which develop out of the single 'building stone' of the germ.[66] This 'centrifugal architecture' is constructed in such a way that it interlocks the organism with whatever environment it inhabits.

Uexküll's big realisation, for Heidegger, is that it is meaningless not only to try to conceptually isolate the organ from the organism, but also to separate the organism from its environment. This environment circumscribes all of the entities and stimuli that trigger individual organic capacities, and cannot therefore be deducted from our understanding of organismic function. It is here that we observe the genesis of an explicit focus on 'world' as a comparative concept in biology. The functioning of the protozoon is understood in relation to the stimuli that it responds to. These stimuli are highly limited and specialised, which means that the protozoon is constituted by a similarly limited and specialised morphology. In this Uexküllian comparative analysis of animal *Umwelten*, we begin to get an impression of the conceptual background of Heidegger's description of the animal as 'world-poor.' The animal is understood as having a world in Uexküll's biology, but its degree of openness to this world is restricted. Uexküll uses the term *Umwelt*, rather than *Welt* to describe the space belonging to the animal, and this suggests that the animal is confined to something narrower than a world, or perhaps to a narrow kind of world. The idea of a reciprocal relationship between an environment and the organism which results in the

[66] Uexküll, J. *Theoretical Biology* p.188

development of organic capacities that bind the organism to its environment presupposes that this is a closed relationship. The organism cannot one day decide to augment its environment and take in a wider range of stimuli because its mode of adaptation and hence its survival depends upon a tight coupling with a specific natural habitat. Heidegger's thesis that the animal is 'poor in world' is an attempt to express, as specifically and baldly as possible, precisely what is metaphysically implicit in this Uexküllian account.

Heidegger claims that Uexküll cannot be given full credit for this approach, which relies on a concept of 'wholeness' that was developed in Driesch's neovitalist research. He states that we must therefore ascribe significance to Driesch's work, as well as to Uexküll's. Heidegger's analysis of their respective observations is not, as Krell suggests, a matter of academic 'diligence,' included in order to portray knowledge of biology only to supersede and undermine it.[67] Heidegger does not wish to use Driesch and Uexküll to confirm his own metaphysical hypotheses. Though it looks at first glance as if Heidegger is postulating the world-poverty of the animal, and then turning to biology and zoology to seek confirmation, the situation is in fact the reverse. It is as a result of his reading of Driesch, and Uexküll in particular, that Heidegger formulates the comparative examination in terms of world and the idea that world varies in scope between different kinds of being. Heidegger's examination of mechanism and the 'instrumental' conception of the organism revealed that items of equipment and machines, insofar as they are essentially inert objects with functions assigned to them, do not have a world, and are therefore unsuitable for comparison with organs. Inert objects are simply 'worldless.' The thesis on world-poverty is then used to express the move made by Uexküll in which the organism is described as an entity that is always

[67] Krell, D.F. (2013) *Derrida and Our Animal Others* p.67

entangled with an environment, and which possesses organs that are developed in accordance with the pressures of its environment.[68]

Heidegger insists that neither mechanism, nor vitalism, nor Uexküll's *Umwelt* research can confront the deepest metaphysical questions and problems from which their work develops without abandoning biology in favour of philosophy. They cannot, according to Heidegger, respond in a deep, philosophical manner to the fundamental attunement of the age. In the *Preliminary Appraisal*, Heidegger presages this point by arguing that any comparison between philosophy and science amounts to a 'fateful debasement' of the essence of philosophy.[69] In Volume III of his lecture course on Nietzsche, Heidegger emphasises this point again, stating that biology never decides, in a philosophically astute way, '*what* is living and *that* such beings are. Rather, the biologist as biologist makes use of this decision as one already made, one that is necessary for him.'[70] The background metaphysics that determines the ontological categorisations that make up the history of attempts to define life cannot be questioned from the perspective of biology, because biology itself would be inconceivable outside of these categorisations. Heidegger claims that 'if the biologist as this specific person makes a decision about what is to be addressed as living, he nonetheless does not make this decision *as a biologist*, nor with the means, the forms of thought, and the proofs of his science; here he speaks as a metaphysician, as a human being who, beyond the field in question, thinks beings as a whole.'[71] When Heidegger credits Uexküll with a clear knowledge and articulation of the principles and categorisations that allow biology to get going, he is crediting Uexküll as a pioneering biologist rather than as a philosopher

[68] I will suspend discussion of the thesis that man is 'world-forming' until the following chapter, where I will return to Heidegger's critique of anthropological *Darstellung* presented in Part One of *FCM*.
[69] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §1a) p.2
[70] Heidegger, M. (1982) *Nietzsche III* ed. Krell, D.F. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins p.42
[71] Ibid.

capable of comprehending the fundamental metaphysical concepts that determine the contemporary age.

Though it initially appears obscure and in need of much clarification, the principle that emerges from the conflict between mechanism and vitalism, and from Uexküll's study of the surrounding world of the animal in particular, is the idea that the animal possesses a world, and that this world is delimited by the stimuli that are relevant for it. Heidegger claims that the animal is, in this sense, 'poor' in world, i.e. 'confined to its environmental world, immured as it were within a fixed sphere that is incapable of further expansion or contraction.'[72] This statement is an explication of the metaphysics implicit in Uexküll, the idea that, though it is responsive to a particular environment, world 'as a whole' is somehow refused to the animal. The protozoon cannot decide to pursue random environmental triggers because its entire organism is developed in accordance with only one or two impulses.

I will now attempt to clarify further how and why Heidegger's thesis on the world-poverty of the animal is derivable from out of the ontological definitions and distinctions drawn in contemporary biology, and from Uexküll's work in particular, by examining more closely Heidegger's engagement with both Driesch and Uexküll.

A metaphysically lucid phase in biology: Heidegger's reading of Hans Driesch and Jakob von Uexküll

Prior to turning to Heidegger's engagement with Driesch and Uexküll specifically, I will give a very brief account of the heritage of the findings of these two biologists. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Roux, a pioneer of the mechanistic conception of the organism, attempted to provide a description of life processes that

[72] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §47 p.198

would eliminate all notions of a non-material, inexplicable 'vital force' at the heart of an organism's life. He developed what he termed a 'mosaic theory' of life. This theory, G.E. Allen says, was based on the idea that with every cell division, hereditary units were 'parcelled out in such a way that each cell generation received increasingly specialised particles,' and 'by the time differentiation was complete each cell type (muscle, nerve, skin) contained only the particles determining that cell's specific characteristics.'[73] In line with this hypothesis Roux experimented with in vitro parthenogenesis.[74] In one of his most famous investigations, Roux discovered that when one of the two blastomeres of a frog egg is killed, the remaining blastomere is still capable of developing into half an embryo under the right conditions. Soon after this experiment, which led, Allen says, to an entirely new research programme, Driesch undertook a series of similar experiments based on the reproductive process in sea urchins. Rather than destroying one of the two blastomeres as Roux had done, Driesch separated them. He discovered that the single blastomere managed to reorganise itself post-separation, and proceeded to develop into a whole larva of a smaller than average size, rather than, as Roux had predicted, into half an embryo. Though he initially sought a physico-chemical explanation for ontogenesis, in the wake of these experiments Driesch eventually abandoned this idea in favour of vitalistic explanations.[75] Despite the fact that Roux's investigations had been highly influential, Driesch and Uexküll did not consider his experiments in parthenogenesis to be decisive for determining what makes an organism 'alive,' nor capable of proving that the organism functions in the

[73] Allen, G.E. "Mechanism, vitalism and organicism in late nineteenth and twentieth century biology" p.270
[74] Parthenogenesis is a type of asexual reproduction during which an embryo develops without fertilisation.
[75] Ibid., p.271

same way as a machine. Driesch's work had served to demonstrate that 'no machine could reconstruct the whole out of individual parts.'[76]

The most determinative result of Driesch's experiments, Heidegger says, was 'the breakthrough of the *idea of the whole* — wholeness as such as the determining factor' when it came to understanding the properties of life.[77] This emergence of the concept of wholeness, reinforced by empirical observation, entailed a movement away from the dominant mechanistic approach, which had 'turned to the cell as the primal element of living things, but did so not in such a way that it attempted from there to put together the organism which had already been misunderstood in its essence and shattered into a heap of fragments, while the cell itself was still considered in a chemico-physical fashion.'[78] The 'whole' in Driesch's analysis consists in the corporeal totality of the organism, i.e. the whole of the animal's body. Uexküll's position differs from Driesch's because Uexküll envisages the organism not as a range of discrete monadic units, but as a totality of reciprocally interrelated entities, each of which has a degree of openness to something other. This 'other' is the environment out of which the organism emerges, and in which it encounters stimuli that trigger its drives. Heidegger claims that, insofar as he neglects the question of this exteriority pertaining to every organic entity, Driesch does not go far enough. His research is, Heidegger says, the first important step away from the idea that the organism is an assemblage of implements, but the second step, which directly addresses the relation of the animal to its environment, is taken by Uexküll.

[76] Ibid.
[77] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.262
[78] Ibid., p.261

For Uexküll, a picture of organismic function could only be achieved through an examination of animal behaviour, which in turn demands an understanding of the way in which the animal relates to its *Umwelt*. Uexküll's work is met with controversy, a controversy that Uexküll attributes to the 'denial' amongst physiologists and zoologists of the existence of the invisible 'unknown' worlds that encircle all organisms.[79] This denial is based, Uexküll says, on the conviction that access to these worlds is impossible, and speculation concerning their contents therefore futile, an attitude that emerges from a mechanistic outlook that debars *ab initio* any exploration of animal worlds:

> Whoever wants to hold on to the conviction that all living things are only machines should abandon all hope of glimpsing [animal] environments.[80]

By adopting the machine view one 'forgets,' Uexküll says, 'that one has from the outset suppressed the principal factor, namely the *subject* who uses these aids, who affects and perceives them.'[81] In order to characterise the surrounding world of the animal, two factors belonging to the structure of the organism must be examined. Firstly, it must be noted that the range of entities that the animal subject perceives belong to its 'perception world' (*Merkwelt*), and secondly, that every action and behaviour that the subject produces belongs to what Uexküll names its 'effect world' (*Wirkwelt*).[82] These two dimensions, taken together, 'form one closed unit, the *environment.*'[83] Uexküll envisages this environment as a kind of bubble that surrounds each organism, containing 'all the features accessible to the subject.'[84] Within this bubble the animal

[79] Uexküll, J. (2010) *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning* trans. O'Neil, J. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press p.41
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p.42
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., p.43

picks up on a specific series of stimuli, and the range of stimuli that the animal is capable of reacting to will vary depending on its complexity. According to Uexküll, if biology manages to avoid the convenient but flawed instrumental explanations of life, it will be capable of taking a richer and more complex approach to the study of animality, one that recognises that the 'corporeal totality' of the animal organism is of limited use when it comes to building up a picture of organic life.

When I claim that this Uexküllian angle is more 'illuminating' for Heidegger than that pertaining to mechanism or vitalism, I do not wish to suggest that Heidegger is deeply committed to Uexküll's being correct about organisms and how they function. Rather, I wish to imply that Uexküll's work exhibits, for Heidegger, a more profound awareness of the underlying principles of biology than the latter, less refined theories. We know, from Part One of *FCM*, that Heidegger considers all contemporary modes of analysis, insofar as they unfold within the attunement of profound boredom, to be at the whim of a fixed set of metaphysical schemas that are characterised by a tendency to divide 'life' from 'spirit.' It is not the case that Heidegger believes Uexküll to be liberated from this tendency. Heidegger's interest in Uexküll stems from the fact that Uexküll has isolated and articulated some of the defining themes of the contemporary zeitgeist.

Uexküll's profound awareness of this zeitgeist has two dimensions. The first concerns Uexküll's methodology. Uexküll makes it his business to recognise and internally critique the key ontological distinctions that emerge in biology. In the contemporary situation, as Heidegger understands it, these distinctions arise all over the place. Life is separated from spirit, and within the purview of biology, the discipline that studies life, many other distinctions are drawn. Uexküll is unusual, according to Heidegger, in his ability to interrogate these distinctions, and in managing, as a result of the knowledge he gains in this interrogation, to investigate the living organism in its '*particular and*

fundamental manner of being,' to make 'life' the genuine subject matter of his biology, rather than explaining away living phenomena in terms of non-living machines.[85] The second dimension of Uexküll's knowledge of the zeitgeist in which he works concerns the nature of the concepts that he makes use of. In positing the organism's definitive openness to something other than it, i.e. its surrounding world, a world that delimits its range of motion and hence 'impoverishes' it, Uexküll has managed to isolate the concepts that, according to Heidegger, firmly characterise '*that fundamental conception in relation to the essence of life* within which every consideration of the essence of life moves.'[86] In other words, Uexküll's conception of the animal's relation to its world represents the pinnacle of the various contemporary attempts to define life. Heidegger claims that the insight that is expressed in Uexküll's work is one that was 'long neglected' in the nineteenth century, 'less because this fundamental conception of life was unknown than because it was supressed by the prevailing mechanistic and physicalist approach to nature. The courage was lacking to take seriously what was intrinsically known, i.e. to unfold the essence of life in its genuine and proper content.'[87] Uexküll's work is important not because it is seminal, but because it possesses this 'courage' to get to grips with what is 'intrinsically known' in biology.

What does Heidegger take this 'intrinsic knowledge' to be and where does it stem from? If we place Uexküll's *Umwelt* research into the context of the history of the concept of life in German biology and philosophy, we soon find other traces of the vital concepts that he makes use of. Over a hundred years prior to Uexküll's formulation of his theory, Johann Gottfried von Herder expressed very similar reflections in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, in which he observes a correlation between the

[85] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §57 p.235
[86] Ibid., §61a) p.260
[87] Ibid.

complexity of an organism and the degree to which it is wedded to an environmental niche, a narrow sphere in which organisms seamlessly and unwittingly respond to natural stimuli:

> *Each animal has its circle* [*Kreis*] to which it belongs from birth, into which it immediately enters, in which it remains all its life, and in which it dies.[88]

In between Herder and Uexküll, the idea of the animal *Umwelt* was pioneered by the Estonian Karl Ernst von Baer, who was, Heidegger says, the first biologist to recognise that animals have access to their own surrounding world.[89] The significance of von Baer's work and the influence it could have had was, Heidegger says, 'impeded and finally buried by the movement of Darwinism' and the mechanistic reductionism of life that developed out of it.[90] Despite this resistance, von Baer's biology managed to capture something 'essential in the first half of the last century,' something that was subsequently covered over by the reductionism of mechanism and the incautious speculations of vitalism.[91]

We can thus see that Uexküll's reflections were very much in keeping with a general current of thought that was developing during his time. It is because Uexküll's work picks out certain epoch-making ideas that Heidegger sustains such a keen interest in it. Heidegger is in pursuit of the metaphysical principles that ground the contemporary situation, and, in Uexküll, he finds a compelling expression of some of these principles. In this respect, Heidegger is treating Uexküll in the same manner as he treats the four philosophers of culture he discusses in Part One. Through an investigation of Uexküll's

[88] Herder, J.G. (2002) "Treatise on the Origin of Language" in *Philosophical Writings* trans. and eds. Forster, M.N. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.78
[89] Heidegger, M. (1995) *Logic: The Question of Truth* trans. Sheehan, T. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press p.215
[90] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61a) p.260
[91] Ibid.

work Heidegger is attempting to expand his knowledge of the fundamental attunement that grips the contemporary age and the possible responses we may have to it. We know that, in his discussion of profound boredom, Heidegger claims that Dasein can have either a deep or a superficial response to this attunement. Though he does not speak Heidegger's language of attunement nor attempt to get to grips with the history of metaphysics, Heidegger believes that Uexküll should be placed on or at least near the former end of this spectrum of possible responses. Unlike the proponents of mechanism and vitalism, Uexküll provides an account of the origins, implications and limitations of the concept of life in contemporary biology. Still, we can question why this account is of such great significance for Heidegger. The fact that Uexküll succeeds in laying bare the metaphysical prejudices of biology does not mean that he himself is liberated from these prejudices. Uexküll's *Umwelt*-based comparative study of animal species is still confined, according to Heidegger, to the pervasive metaphysical distinction between life and spirit. In his own articulation of contemporary notions of the essence of animality in terms of 'poverty in world,' Heidegger describes all such comparative claims, including Uexküll's, as 'crude.'[92] When Heidegger describes the three theses as 'statements of essence,' he therefore wishes to imply that they are essential in and for the contemporary age that forms the background of his study in *FCM*; he does not wish to endorse them as essential definitions 'for all time.'[93]

The derivative character of Heidegger's conception of animality

I have been arguing that Heidegger bases his claim that the animal is 'poor in world' on what he considers to be metaphysically implicit in Uexküll's depiction of the organism as confined to a surrounding environment. In this final section I will defend this

[92] Ibid., §42 p.177
[93] Ibid., §61a) p.260

argument further by highlighting more specifically the link between Heidegger's analysis of world-poverty and Uexküll's *Umwelt* theory. I hope to convey, in my reading of these passages, an original way of interpreting this part of *FCM*, one that presents an alternative to the Krellian reading detailed in chapter one. The following passage serves to directly challenge Krell's claim that Heidegger examines biology merely as a matter of thoroughness and diligence.[94] It also clarifies emphatically the purpose of Heidegger's engagement with Uexküll in *FCM*:

> [Uexküll's] investigations are very highly valued today, but they have not yet acquired the fundamental significance they could have if a more radical interpretation of the organism were developed on their basis. In this connection the totality of the organism would not merely consist in the corporeal totality of the animal, but rather this corporeal totality could itself only be understood on the basis of that original totality which is circumscribed by what we called the *disinhibiting ring*.[95]

It is clear from this passage that Heidegger conceives of his own characterisation of the disinhibiting *Umring* of the animal as nothing other than a derivation of Uexküll's depiction of the animal *Umwelt*. In recognising this connection, we should not, Heidegger says, be distracted by Uexküll's use of the term *Welt*, which signifies a different understanding of world to the concept that Heidegger develops throughout Part One.[96] The crucial point for Heidegger is not simply the fact that Uexküll makes use of the concept of 'world' in his analysis, or that he does so as part of a comparative analysis of different species, envisaging organisms as confined to environments that differ in their scope. Rather, Heidegger is interested in the manner in which Uexküll responds to the impasse between mechanism and vitalism by going right back to the

[94] Krell, D.F. *Derrida and Our Animal Others* p.67
[95] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.263
[96] Ibid.

question of the ontological distinctions that are implicit in biology and that reveal the contemporary understanding of the concept of life.

Heidegger insists that in formulating the theory of the *Umwelt*, Uexküll 'means nothing other than what we have characterised as the disinhibiting ring' of the animal.[97] Heidegger thus understands his own formulation of the structure of animality to be a direct representation of Uexküll's, one that renders explicit the metaphysical conception of animality contained within it. Heidegger's argument here is that if we attempt to uncover the fundamental presuppositions of *Umwelt* theory, we will be left with the idea that the animal is always tied to a world, and that the structure and scope of this world, along with its morphology, determine and restrict whatever stimuli are made apparent to it. Heidegger describes this restriction as poverty: as a level of receptivity to a particular set of stimuli at the expense of all other entities. The animal is thus described as 'poor in world.' I wish to argue, along these lines, that Heidegger's claims about life and animality are lifted straight out of Uexküll's *Umwelt* research. The thesis that the animal is poor in world, according to my argument, is no longer to be understood as Heidegger's own original thesis. Heidegger formulates the thesis as part of his pursuit of the contemporary life-spirit division for the purpose of coming to understand the landscape and delusions of contemporary metaphysics. If we closely examine the passages containing Heidegger's reflections on life, we see that his own voice in this investigation is suppressed:

> The animal's *way of being*, which we call '*life*,' is *not without access* to what is around it and about it, to that amongst which it appears as a living being. It is because of this that the claim arises that the animal has an environmental world of its own within which it moves.[98]

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., §47 p.198

Heidegger claims to be describing an approach that belongs to the 'cutting edge' of contemporary biology, rather than, as Krell et al. believe, constructing his own theory of animality. Heidegger insists that his claim about the confined environmental world of the animal is one that 'arises' in biology, where it is gradually crystallised in the work of von Baer, Driesch and Uexküll. Heidegger uses his phrase 'world-poverty' to foreground the metaphysical commitments of these scientists. However, we can easily find explicit articulation of this concept of deprivation in Uexküll's writing. Uexküll's famous example of the *Umwelt* of the tick, in which he describes the structure of the tick's surrounding world as 'impoverished,' can be read as an account of an extreme version of world-poverty:

> From the enormous world surrounding the tick, three stimuli glow like signal lights in the darkness and serve as directional signs that lead the tick surely to its target. In order to make this possible the tick has been given, beyond its body receptors and effectors, three perception signs, which it can use as features. Through these features, the progression of the tick's actions is so strictly prescribed that the tick can only produce very determinate effect marks.
>
> The whole rich world surrounding the tick is constricted and transformed into an impoverished structure that, most importantly of all, consists only of three features and effect marks – the tick's environment. However, the poverty of this environment is needful for the certainty of action, and certainty is more important than riches.[99]

Insofar as it takes Heidegger to be laying out his own theory of animality in Part Two of *FCM*, the Krellian reading assumes that all language of deprivation belongs to Heidegger's own establishment of the idea of the impoverished surrounding world of the animal, that Heidegger himself has posited a terrain of narrow stimuli encircling the animal, beyond which entities are meaningless for it. Aside from the general manner in which it ignores the wider metaphysical context of *FCM*, there are two specific

[99] Uexküll, J. *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* p.51

dimensions to this failure in the Krellian reading. Firstly, as indicated above, this reading ignores the derivative character of Heidegger's claims in Part Two of *FCM*, and does not recognise their context in the history of the concept of animal worlds that stems from Herder through von Baer and into Uexküll's work. Secondly, the Krellian reading wrongly assumes that the concept of a structure of stimuli encircling animals, out of which the concept of world-poverty emerges, is one that derogates animality, and entails an evaluative scale of beings. In Uexküll's tick example, the tick's environing world, though it is 'impoverished,' is a world of acute 'certainty,' a certainty that other more complex creatures forego. There is a direct link drawn in the example between poverty and security. The groundwork for this idea of a link between destitution and positive organic traits was established, as I have already indicated, in Herder's speculations regarding advantages that develop within simplistic organismic structures:

> The bee in its hive builds with the wisdom that *Egeria* could not teach her *Numa*; but beyond these cells and beyond its destined occupation in these cells the bee is also nothing. The spider weaves with the art of Minerva; but all its art is also woven out in this narrow spinning-space; that is its world! How marvellous is the insect, and how narrow the circle of its effect![100]

Once again, context is everything when it comes to comprehending Heidegger's reflections concerning animality. Krell's claim that Heidegger's analysis devalues animal life appears problematic firstly when we consider that Heidegger discusses biology in order to reveal the metaphysical *delusions* of contemporary thinking rather than to promote his own theoretical biology, and secondly if we look at the trajectory in comparative anatomy that prefaces Uexküll's work and Heidegger's interpretation of it. We can see that this comparative approach problematizes rather than reinforces classical hierarchies of beings. The image of animal life that emerges from this

[100] Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" p.78

Herderian-inspired phase in the history of biology is one in which the animal is safeguarded from the contingency and indeterminacy of human life. To adopt Heideggerian vocabulary, animal life is not determined by a thrownness into world that exposes it to multiple possibilities, including the ultimate and most radical possibility of death. Rather, the animal is intimate with the resources of its environment, held fast to a space to which it is adapted, and which it always already knows how to navigate. It is for these reasons that Uexküll claims that the infusorian 'rests more peacefully in its environment than does the child in its cradle.'[101]

The implications of my argument for this rereading of Part Two of *FCM* is that if we take the lecture course as a whole rather than jump to the few pages where Heidegger outlines his three theses, we can see that the theses play a relatively minor role in the overall context of the lecture course. This metaphysical context, which foreshadows Heidegger's comparative examination, is more revealing and important than the question concerning the extent to which the comparative tradition in biology that Heidegger examines is guilty of valorising or derogating animal life. The critical point to bear in mind, I wish to argue, is the fact that Heidegger is attempting to engage us with the metaphysical suppositions and prejudices that knit together the contemporary anthropological optic through which we encounter ourselves and our place in the world. The three theses are intended to express these prejudices and presuppositions, so it is no wonder that they appear to do precisely that.

Introducing the move from life to spirit

This chapter has argued that Heidegger posits his three theses as part of a broad metaphysical agenda, namely, to understand the metaphysical assumptions and

[101] Cited in Gordon, P. (2010) *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press p.75

delusions that ground the contemporary epoch, and to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and role of the concept of 'life' as one of the key principles of the epoch. Heidegger discovers this concept in its most metaphysically lucid form in Uexküll's work. In his defence of the concept of the world of the animal, Uexküll provides a challenging appraisal of the trends in thinking that are *de rigueur* in contemporary biology, an appraisal that exposes the inheritance of the contemporary understanding of life. Heidegger considers Uexküll's research in this area to be metaphysically significant insofar as it leads to the realisation that life disrupts the categories that are ascribed to machines and to inert matter. According to this Uexküllian view, Heidegger says, the dynamic relationship between the animal and its environment, the sphere into which it incorporates aspects of the world that are relevant for it, reveals the '*intrinsically dominant character of living beings amongst beings in general*, an intrinsic elevation [*Erhabenheit*] of nature over itself, a sublimity that is lived in life itself.'[102] According to Heidegger, the fact that Uexküll makes this very point and does so emphatically qualifies him as a one of the clearest articulators of the metaphysical commitments of contemporary biology. Heidegger's contention is that by studying Uexküll's findings we can reach a deeper understanding of life as one of the two categories that dominates our engagement with entities and with ourselves.

Heidegger claims that Uexküll's work takes us to the cusp of what biology is capable of, and, in so doing, reveals the limitations of biology. Uexküll's concept of the world of the organism runs out of steam at a very specific point, namely the point at which we begin to question the human being. If we extend the model of the *Umwelt* to include human beings, the 'whole approach,' Heidegger says, becomes 'philosophically

[102]Heidegger, M. *FCM* §66 p.278

problematic.'[103] Uexküll observes a correlation between the complexity of an animal and the breadth and richness of its world. Uexküll's tick has sharp senses but a narrow world, whereas more complex creatures will be able to take in a wider range of stimuli. Is the human being simply an example of a complex organism with an extended *Umwelt*? If we approach the human being using Uexküll's theory, we find that, despite being an ostensibly 'complex' living entity, it is notably lacking in *any* specific environment, as well as in correlative fine-tuned perceptual organs.[104] The human thus represents something of a problem. We cannot understand the morphology and functioning of the human organism using Uexküllian principles if we have to dispense with the concept of an *Umwelt* in the case of the human.

If the human exists in the absence of an *Umwelt*, and, at the same time, lacks the acute sensory organs of nonhuman animals, it would appear that on entering the world, the human is confronted with a barrage of stimuli, what William James describes as a 'blooming buzzing confusion.'[105] The world of the human is entirely distinct from the encircling environment of the animal, in which various relevant stimuli 'glow like signal lights.' From the point at which Uexküll's research reaches its limit – the point at which we arrive at the conceptual walls that surround biology – we can catch a glimpse of the terrain of entities that it does not explain. In other words, another field of beings has emerged in opposition to life, that of the human world: language, reason, all those peculiarly human capacities that, since the human is not a straightforward organism in an *Umwelt*, tend to be accounted for in terms of 'spirit.' Heidegger has already argued in Part One that this second terrain of beings is presupposed, in the contemporary age,

[103] Ibid., §61b) p.263
[104] To illustrate this point Heidegger invites us to compare the falcon's highly 'discriminatory' visual capacity over our own comparatively weak visual organs (Ibid., §46 p.194).
[105] James, W. (2007) *Principles of Psychology Volume I* New York, NY: Cosimo p.488

by philosophers of culture, 'diagnosticians' whose 'anthropological' attempts to define the human end up diverting attention away from it. Just as mechanism seeks explanations for life by looking away from living beings towards machines, Heidegger argues that anthropology attempts to define man by looking away from that which is essentially human, and propagating delusions concerning man's being as a life-spirit composite. Having provided an exposition of the 'life' side of this contemporary delusion in this chapter, I will turn in the following chapter to Heidegger's claims concerning the concept of 'spirit' by looking in more detail at the various manifestations of the anthropological worldview that he began to critique in Part One of *FCM*.

Chapter Six: Spirit and anthropology

The conspicuous absence of anthropology in FCM

The previous four chapters consisted of an exegetical interpretation of *FCM*, one that attempted to systematically retrieve its neglected contents. The remaining two chapters will be dedicated to a critical appraisal of the lecture course, and the development of my own argument regarding ways in which the metaphysical concepts that Heidegger presents in the lectures could be taken further. My intention, up until this point, has been to reveal a deficit at the heart of the Krellian reading by examining the rich metaphysical context that surrounds and informs Heidegger's comparative examination. In particular I wished to demonstrate that, though Krell et al. find Heidegger's engagement with biology so controversial, this engagement in fact amounts to a careful, even-handed exposition of the biology of the time. A closer look at the metaphysical suppositions of Jakob von Uexküll et al. reveals that Heidegger is really commentating on biological developments rather than trying to project his own idiosyncratic prejudices onto biology. Early twentieth century biology tends to produce taxonomies that are based on the concept of a spectrum of animal worlds. Heidegger's crystallisation of the metaphysical principles that ground these taxonomies is by no means the most controversial aspect of *FCM*. Far more problematic than his handling of biology is his cursory treatment of anthropology. The observation that Heidegger mishandles anthropology rather than biology in the lecture course will form the basis of these final critical chapters.

If we reject the Krellian reading on the basis of its misinterpretation of the 'biology sections,' a misinterpretation that stems from its disproportionate attentiveness to the comparative examination and corresponding neglect of the wider contents of *FCM*, we

will still be faced with a significant problem; a mysterious oversight still remains. However, this oversight is one that is present in the lecture course itself. In Part One, Heidegger eschews anthropology as the parent of all that he is trying to avoid in *FCM*: worldview, *Darstellung*, anthropocentrism etc. However, whereas he dedicates four chapters to life and biology, he is finished with anthropology after one or two sentences. Anthropology is described by Heidegger as the underlying mechanism that determines the tenor of all *Kulturphilosophie*.[1] It is the means by which contemporary man has become detached from any confrontation with himself. In many respects, it is the engine of profound boredom. And yet, despite posing a serious threat, this looming adversary does not receive any extended treatment in *FCM* at any stage.

In his brief but forceful dismissal of anthropology, Heidegger attempts to construct an image of the discipline as a field that is fraught with damaging, derivative and unthinking metaphysical prejudices concerning the life-spirit dichotomy. Anthropology is perhaps beneath biology in Heidegger's eyes, and is therefore not worth anything more than a quick mention. However, just as biology undergoes an interesting metaphysical sea change in the 1920s as a result of Uexküll's pioneering work, anthropology also enjoys an especially fertile period, one of which Heidegger is well aware,[2] and one that comes about as a result of the developments in biology that he pays such careful attention to. Having examined the 'life' side of the life-spirit opposition, Heidegger does not give equal treatment to the 'spirit' side. If we look at the anthropological research that takes place in 1920s Germany, we discover a substantial

[1] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18c) p.77

[2] In *FCM* Heidegger makes passing reference to the work of Max Scheler, one of the principal figures of the anthropological tradition in 1920s Germany (§18a) p.70; §46 p.192). He also touches on contemporary anthropology in his 1929 lecture course *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Part Four A), and does so more extensively in his 1929 debate with Ernst Cassirer at Davos (see Gordon, P. (2010) *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*).

philosophical tradition comprised of thinkers who make strikingly similar claims to those found in *FCM*. As I will indicate in the following section, Heidegger's analysis of Uexküll broaches the outer edge of this research but then abruptly halts, leaving us without any exposition of its vital contents. In this chapter I will argue that this neglect of anthropology constitutes a serious omission in the metaphysical history that Heidegger presents. I will aim to show that by replenishing the lack of anthropological analysis in the lecture course, it is possible to wrest further interesting ideas from the concepts that it contains.

A closer look at the missing stage of spirit and anthropology

The result of Heidegger's examination of contemporary biology is the idea that if we look at the deepest deliverances of biology, we will eventually hit upon its limitations. Uexküll's concept of the animal *Umwelt*, illuminating as it is, 'becomes philosophically problematic,' Heidegger says, 'if we proceed to talk about the human world in the same manner.'[3] Heidegger claims that amongst biologists, 'Uexküll is the one who has repeatedly pointed out with the greatest emphasis that what the animal stands in relation to is given for it in a different way than it is for the human being. Yet this is precisely the place where the decisive problem lies concealed and demands to be exposed.'[4] It is on account of the radical and revisionary nature of his work that Uexküll manages, according to Heidegger, to identify and reveal this limitation in biology. As a result of Uexküll's reflections on life, a different assemblage of beings begins to emerge, beings that appear to subvert Uexküll's definition of the organism. This is the region belonging to the human, and it includes all of man's capacities, such as intellect, reason and language. According to the metaphysical picture that emerges in biology, and, as we

[3] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.263
[4] Ibid., §61c) p.264

will see, in anthropology, these capacities are not present in *Umwelt*-orientated nonhuman animals. Because the human does not appear to have any particular *Umwelt*, its survival cannot be accounted for and understood in terms of customary laws of biological adaptation.

Heidegger has argued throughout Part One of *FCM* — from his examination of the *physis-ēthos* divide to his analysis of the Apollonian-Dionysian divide in Nietzsche and the subsequent proclamations from *Kulturphilosophie* – that the history of metaphysics has produced a division between 'life' and 'spirit.' The territory that biology does not explain, i.e. the nature of man's being, is the territory of 'spirit' according to all of the major characterisations of the contemporary epoch that Heidegger cites in Part One. We can recall that Heidegger uses examples of four 'philosophers of culture,' Spengler, Scheler, Ziegler and Klages, to explicate the manner in which contemporary thought has ossified the divide that it has inherited between life and spirit. These thinkers define the human as embroiled in a drama involving these two dimensions, and in so doing, they mark a mutation towards a kind of anthropo-biological worldview. Despite their grandiloquent tones and their seductive use of diagnostic accounts of the human's 'place' and 'role in history,' these thinkers only ever manage a 'setting out' of the human, a *Darstellung* that is developed out of a superficial, external treatment of it. Heidegger claims that despite aiming to reveal something profound about the 'human condition,' Spengler et al. treat man as the embodiment of the two 'components' of life and spirit, components that, they believe, we can identify and study from afar.[5] In their attempts to approximate the objectivity and detachment of the sciences, these thinkers

[5] Ibid., §18a) p.71

fail to 'involve us.'[6] In fact, they serve to 'untie us' from ourselves, and yet do so 'precisely as anthropology.'[7]

Heidegger comments in Part Two that, having provided this critique in Part One, there is no need to go further into an analysis of anthropology.[8] He considers it necessary to investigate biology in order to understand the manner in which the concept of life is grasped and handled in the contemporary epoch, but claims that he has already done this work when it comes to the concept of spirit. Though Heidegger says very little about anthropology in particular in *FCM*, what he does say launches a global attack. This attack reads like an inversion of Kant's claim, in his *Lectures on Logic*, that all of the principal questions of philosophy ultimately stem from the foundational 'anthropological' question of what it means to be human.[9] For Heidegger, this idea of a reduction to anthropology is understood pejoratively as a failure of thinking. According to his appraisal of contemporary thought in *FCM*, it is in virtue rather than in spite of the fact that Spengler et al. think anthropologically, and produce anthropological theories, that they not only deter but subvert philosophical enquiries into the essence of the human.

Heidegger targets Scheler's work as the most salient example of the kind of anthropological worldview that treats the human as a duality of life and spirit. This engagement with Scheler takes place in the context of Heidegger's critique of *Kulturphilosophie*; Heidegger has very little to say about Scheler's anthropological work. When Heidegger does very briefly allude to Scheler's anthropology, those who are uninitiated with Scheler may be left confused about the kind of anthropology that is

[6] Ibid., §18c) p.75
[7] Ibid., p.77
[8] Ibid., §67 pp.281-282
[9] Kant, I. (1992) *Lectures on Logic* ed. Young, J.M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.538

being referred to here. Given that Heidegger appraises Scheler as part of a general critique of *Kulturphilosophie* and cultural diagnosis in particular, the term might be taken to refer to the field of cultural anthropology. Alternatively, it could be taken to indicate one of the two other main branches of anthropology that are the most well-known constituents of the field: biological anthropology and social anthropology. Because Heidegger does not specify the anthropological content of Scheler's thought, and simply accuses him of possessing a pervasive anthropological worldview, it is likely that the reader will miss the fact that Scheler's anthropology is a *philosophical* anthropology rather than a cultural, social or biological anthropology. As such, it is not a branch of ontic science or a segment of *Kulturphilosophie*, but is rather part of a sub-discipline of the tradition of post-Kantian philosophy, a discipline that saw some of its most significant publications in the years just prior to *FCM*.[10]

By critiquing Scheler, Heidegger poses a challenge to the main protagonist of the tradition of philosophical anthropology, but he does not provide us with any detail of the philosophical roots of this tradition. Instead he simply cites anthropology as a damaging example of the disarticulation of human knowledge and of the exploitation of the life-spirit opposition. One of the most confusing aspects of this omission is that Heidegger anticipates and makes space for an analysis of anthropology in the lecture course. Just as he wishes to use the thesis that the animal is poor in world to navigate biology and the life side of the life-spirit opposition, it makes sense that he would use the thesis that man is 'world-forming' to navigate anthropology and 'spirit.' Heidegger's aim, after all, is to trace the patterns and categories of thought that dominate contemporary thinking in order to lay bare the metaphysical prejudices that

[10] For example, Max Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (1928), and Helmuth Plessner's *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (1928).

these patterns and categories incorporate, and to retrieve more essential concepts from them. Looking at anthropology, particularly given the metaphysically noxious effect that he ascribes to it, is surely a logical part of this general assessment of the metaphysical landscape and pitfalls of modern thought. Why should anthropology be any less relevant than biology in this context? In the following section I will elaborate the Schelerian anthropology that Heidegger alludes to. I will then argue that Heidegger's relationship to this anthropology is not as straightforward as he leads us to believe.

German philosophical anthropology of the 1920s

Since Heidegger isolates Scheler as the key protagonist in his critique of the anthropological 'worldview,' the following discussion of anthropology will be focused around Scheler. However I will also include a brief look at a pre-Schelerian figure, Johann Gottfried von Herder, who is, in many respects, a progenitor of the field of philosophical anthropology, and a post-Schelerian figure, Arnold Gehlen. Taken together, these three thinkers mark the heritage and development of the core ideas of the discipline, and gaining a perspective on their work will enable me to develop a more detailed understanding of Heidegger's problematic neglect of anthropology in *FCM*.

Herder's pioneering vision for the field of anthropology in the late eighteenth century has a Romantic motivation, one that stems from a scepticism concerning the damaging categorisations of Enlightenment thinking. Taylor claims that, according to Herder and the Romantics, these categorisations 'dissect' and 'objectify' human nature by separating 'soul from body, reason from feeling, reason from imagination, thought from senses, desire from calculation and so on.'[11] Herder's anthropology attempts to re-unify

[11] Taylor, C. (1975) *Hegel* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.23

these disparate elements by privileging two essential, coextensive attributes of human beings: reflection (*Besonnenheit*) and language.[12] These features, Herder claims, are the principal points of distinction between humans and nonhuman animals, and together they possess a dual significance.[13] Not only are they the mechanisms that allow the human to comprehend and articulate external objects and states of affairs, reflection and linguistic utterances also enable the realisation of something essential about the human.[14] By developing language, human beings bring their own fundamental nature to expression, as well as the fundamental nature of the entities that surround them.[15] Hence Taylor claims that words, for Herder, 'do not just refer, they are also precipitates of an activity in which the human form of consciousness comes to be.'[16] Nonhuman animals, in Herder's view, do not possess this inner impulse for self-realisation through reflection and linguistic expression because animal life, endowed with the 'perfections' of acute sensory awareness, is not forced into a deliberative space.[17] The composition of the animal world, Herder says, does not call for reflecting and questioning.[18]

According to Herder it is the capacity for *Besonnenheit* that unhinges human life from the domain of other living beings. In the previous chapter I touched on Herder's reflections concerning the sense in which all nonhuman animals belong to a 'circle' (*Kreis*) within which they behave in accordance with specific environmental triggers.[19] Herder argues that human beings, in contrast to animals, are unique in their absence of a circle, i.e. in the reflective openness of their lives.[20] It is not that Herder wishes to deny

[12] Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" p.85
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., pp.127-128
[15] Ibid.
[16] Taylor, C. *Hegel*., p.19
[17] Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" p.128
[18] Ibid., p.78
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

this openness to animals, it is simply that he does not consider them to need it. Animal life, according to Herder, is constituted by a biological adeptness; the animal is ensconced in its environment and need only respond to aspects of its surroundings that stimulate its sensory organs:

> [T]he smaller the sphere of animals is, the less they need language. The sharper the senses are, the more their representations are directed to a single thing, the more pull their drives have, then the narrower is the common-understanding in whatever sounds signs, expressions they may make. It is living mechanism, ruling instinct, that speaks and hears there. How little it must speak in order to be heard![21]

Human beings, on the other hand, possess very meagre biological endowments, and are therefore forced to 'speak in order to be heard.' The human is not keenly receptive to any kind of natural habitat, and consequently it has no choice but to seek an understanding of itself and the world, and to establish itself through articulation. Herder thus identifies a reciprocal relation between the human's peculiar absence of an environment and its capacity for language and reflection.[22] Man, Herder says, is estranged from an encircling environment and his senses 'are not sharpened for a single thing; he has senses for everything and hence naturally for each *particular* thing weaker and duller senses.'[23] Man's reflective capacity therefore 'had to express itself immediately when the weaker sensuality and all the poverty of his lacks expressed itself. The *instinctless*, *miserable* creature which came from nature's hands so abandoned was also from the first moment on the *freely active*, *rational* creature which was destined to help itself, and inevitably had the ability to do so.'[24] The human's dearth of instinct and subsequent attempt to establish itself in other ways is, for Herder, constitutive of its essential nature. Man's 'centre of gravity, the main direction of his

[21] Ibid., p.70
[22] Ibid., p.128
[23]Ibid., p.79
[24] Ibid., p.128

soul's efficacies, fell as much on this *understanding*, on *human awareness* [*Besonnenheit*], as with the bee it falls immediately on sucking and building.'[25] Reflection and language cannot, therefore, be described as discontinuous with nature, since they belong to man's mode of life, however feeble this mode may appear when compared with that of nonhuman animals. Herder claims that man's 'forces' of *Besonnenheit* and language and the organic weaknesses that motivate these forces are 'without comparison or […] balancing of one against another, *his nature*.'[26]

Landmann describes this Herderian link between morphological weakness and the development of language in the following way:

> Since he has no natural points of reference by which to categorise the world, man posits artificial ones himself; only with their help does he succeed in processing the abundance of impressions, which would paralyse him by their strangeness and leave him confused; and thus he makes things "manageable." Indeed the main achievement in this regard is done by language […] Language, by classifying everything under concepts, clears up the overcrowded chaos.[27]

For Herder, the manner in which the human uses language to reach out beyond the realm of animality, i.e. beyond the domain of ever-flowing stimuli, is essentially the result of a natural destitution on the part of human beings, not an abstract urge towards understanding and awareness. Human beings do not occupy an intermediary position between God and the animals because of some intrinsically superior feature; the requisite of man's apparent superiority when it comes to understanding and language is to be found in his 'miserably' weak organic form.[28]

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Landmann, M. (1974) *Philosophical Anthropology* trans. Parent, D.J. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press p.198
[28] Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" p.128

The manner in which Herder isolates this structure of the human's organic deficiency and amelioration in the form of *Besonnenheit* and language anticipates Scheler's concern, beginning in the 1920s, with understanding human beings in terms of their distinctive absence of organic specialisation. However, prior to the genesis of Scheler's anthropology, a crucial intermediary development takes place in biology, one that shapes and informs the field of philosophical anthropology in general. This development occurs in Uexküll's theoretical biology, in particular his claim that a picture of organismic function can only be achieved through an examination of animal behaviour, which in turn demands an understanding of the way in which the animal relates to its *Umwelt*. The variation in the complexity of different animal species is likewise best described in terms of the varying range of relevant environmental triggers available to them in their *Umwelten*. This research empirically furnishes Herder's earlier comparative anthropological analysis based on the notion of the 'circle' of different animal species and its conspicuous absence in the case of the human. From the start of his inquiry, Herder insists that human existence lacks an environmental circle. Uexküll, on the other hand, seems more agnostic about the question of the human's possession of an *Umwelt*.[29] This precise question prefaces Scheler and Gehlen's work, and the twentieth century German tradition of philosophical anthropology generally. In taking up this line of enquiry, the philosophical anthropologists of the 1920s observe that the human does not appear to exhibit fully determined organic traits, but instead seems to incorporate, in its very physiology, a kind of insecurity. The philosophical anthropologists, as Landmann says, entirely revise Enlightenment concepts of subjectivity as well as the orthodox categories, rules and methods of biological analysis,

[29]The extent to which Uexküll considers the human being to be in possession of an *Umwelt* is debatable. For a discussion of this matter see Geoffrey Winthrop-Young's *Afterword* to Uexküll's *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*.

with the result that the human is understood as a being that foregoes the organic drives of other animals:

> Man […] has no instincts – let this exaggeration be allowed for the sake of clarity. Nature does not say how he is to behave in a given situation. With the help of his own reflection he must determine his behaviour independently, he must decide on his own how he will use the world and get along in it. He does not merely react to it, he acts upon it. But to do this he must know the world. He must have deeply penetrating and objective experience of it, as comprehensive as possible, in order to shape his behaviour according to the measure of this experience. Therefore his knowledge has a completely different and broader mission in the total economy of his life than the animals' knowledge has for them. It must not only discover signals and release mechanisms but also establish a much richer relationship to reality; it must not only select a sector of the world but also bring the world to as adequate a realisation as possible.[30]

In keeping with this approach Scheler observes, by means of a comparative analysis similar to that employed by Herder, a disconnect between the human organism and its environment. Scheler coins the term 'world-openness' (*Weltoffenheit*) to describe the human's lack of adaptation to any specific natural habitat, and its corresponding reduction of organic instincts. This organic deficit is depicted by Scheler as a condition for the possibility of the human's 'higher' forms of development.[31] Scheler accounts for the human's uncanny 'detachability' from nature by invoking the concept of 'spirit.'[32] It is only as a 'spiritual' being that the human is able to interpret, understand and express itself, to determine a position and role for itself in the face of its absence of any organic determination.[33] This principle of spirit, Scheler says, is 'opposed to life as such, even to life in man.'[34] As a spiritual being, the human foregoes the sharp biotic aptitude

[30] Landmann, M. *Philosophical Anthropology* p.192
[31] Scheler, M. (1978) "On the Idea of Man" trans. by Nabe, C. *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* Vol. 9, 3, pp.184—198 p.191
[32] Scheler, M. cited in Weiss, D. (2002) (eds.) *Interpreting Man* Aurora, CO: The Davies Group Publishers p.52
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

enjoyed by other animals. The human's distinct capacities, for example its use of tools, intellect, and the way in which it develops culture, must be regarded, according to Scheler, as compensations. The tool, Scheler says, when 'looked at from a vital standpoint, is *not* to be regarded […] as a sign of a *positive development* of life creating organs. It is rather the expression and consequence of a vital lack.'[35] The ability to develop biologically supererogatory faculties that are not found amongst nonhuman animals 'can only arise when the power to produce organs, and the capacity for vital development has *exhausted* itself in principle, or when the natural powers of attack and of overcoming other animals or of handling the environment by organs has itself proven to be so weak that only the method of deception is left to overcome this weakness.'[36] When considered in this way, intellect and tool use appear, Scheler says, to be 'pitiable surrogates for new organ development.'[37]

Scheler attempts to ward off concern over the metaphysically loaded character of the term 'spirit' by rejecting the definition of spirit as a 'stage of life,' a category found at the top of a hierarchical *scala naturae.*[38] Rather, the term spirit is used to denote the human's relationship to 'world,' the 'world-openness' that is the result of its freedom from an organic niche. Gehlen appropriates certain aspects of this idea, setting Scheler's comparative physiology and Herder's Romantic vision of anthropology into a more richly empirical, morphological context. But ultimately, Gehlen entirely rejects all language of 'spirituality.' For Gehlen the anthropological definition of the human need not appeal to a metaphysical or spiritual detachment from the natural domain, and can

[35] Scheler, M. (1978) "On the Idea of Man" p.191
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Scheler, M. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.52

be explained solely in terms of the human's distinct morphology.[39] Gehlen claims that in comparison to the great apes, with their 'overdeveloped arms for swinging, feet designed for climbing, body hair, and powerful canine teeth – man appears to be hopelessly unadapted,' and must be 'characterised by a singular lack of biological means.'[40]

Where other animals slot neatly into a habitat, there exists an irreducible gap between the human and the environment. Gehlen argues that the human being quite literally embodies this gap; it is incorporated into the configuration of its organism. In the human a 'hiatus' is created between impulses and action, which 'opens up the possibility of an "inner life" for the human being,' a reflective space that is felt when the human is in a state of 'complete rest,' detached from any active engagement with its surroundings.[41] There is thus a space for reflection – for *Besonnenheit* – built into the morphology of human beings with the effect that, unlike animal impulses, human impulses are plastic and open. This structure, Gehlen argues, 'is necessary for an acting being who must exist within the open abundance of the world, responding to whatever situation it may encounter by forming expectations dictated by experience.'[42] Because the human domain is one of cautious reflection and 'suspenseful alertness,' humans are 'denied the direct gratification […] that an animal enjoys,' and must 'confront the world and its constant surprises and render it available, knowable, intimately familiar and usable.'[43] The human being's attempt to structure a meaningful world for itself is, for Gehlen, a visceral need that pertains to its morphological 'incompleteness' and

[39] Gehlen, A. (1988) *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press p.9
[40] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.63
[41] Gehlen, A. *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* p.333; p.335
[42] Ibid., p.336
[43] Ibid., p.238

subsequent instability. Gehlen claims that this description of the human as 'not yet determined' has two important implications.[44] Firstly, 'it is yet undetermined exactly what man is; second, the human being is somehow "unfinished," not firmly established.'[45]

Human morphology, for the philosophical anthropologists, thus incorporates an 'organisational principle' quite distinct from that of other creatures.[46] By using its own initiative, Gehlen says, the human must transform its weaknesses into opportunities for survival. Man uses his detachment from the demands of physical stimuli to gain an interpretive distance, out of which he can 'develop an understanding of himself.'[47] Nature has thus 'accorded a special position to man, or – to put it differently – in man she has pursued a unique, hitherto untrodden path of development; she has created a new organisational principle. A consequence of this principle is that man's existence poses a difficult problem; his survival becomes his greatest challenge and greatest accomplishment.'[48] Gehlen argues that the interpretation of the human as just another part of nature is therefore 'scientifically ambiguous,' precisely because, as Scheler has already noted, the attributes that enable man's survival are attributes that run counter to the 'natural' order of evolutionary development.

Why should nature have produced a creature with such scanty physical means? When approaching this question, Gehlen states that we must consider the problems that man faces as 'part of his very existence,' and not as aberrations.[49] The human has a tenuous relationship to nature to the extent that its very physiology is tenuous. It has none of the

[44] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.60
[45] Ibid., pp.60-61
[46] Ibid., p.61
[47] Ibid., p.65
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., p.60

strength or keenness of senses characteristic of other animals, and yet it is able to propagate in any environment on earth, live longer than any other mammal, and develop culture and institutions. In other words, despite the human's natural weaknesses, it is capable of somehow harnessing the waywardness of the world and enabling its own survival.

***Unravelling Heidegger's rejection of all anthropological approaches in* FCM**

Does this brief exposition of some core principles in philosophical anthropology serve to corroborate Heidegger's claim that anthropology, philosophical or otherwise, is a form of *Darstellung*, a 'setting out' of the human that does not capture anything 'essential' about it? For Heidegger the answer, of course, is 'yes,' but his minimal comments concerning anthropology in *FCM* require some unravelling if we are to clarify the reasons behind his wholesale rejection of the discipline.

According to Heidegger, any attempt to absolve philosophical anthropology of the charge that it is a form of representation founded on derivative and unquestioned concepts of life and spirit will be entirely misguided. For it is impossible to explain away the fact that, as the progeny of a fixed anthropo-biological worldview, philosophical anthropology, like all branches of anthropology, begins with the premature supposition that the human is a biological entity, a primate.[50] Despite the fact that it claims philosophical as well as scientific origins, philosophical anthropology remains armed with this restrictive definition. For Heidegger, its reliance upon the definition of the human as a kind of ape debars philosophical anthropology from engaging with the activity of philosophising.

[50] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §43 p.179

We can recall that Heidegger's aim in *FCM* is to defend the idea that philosophy, as the activity that arises from and expresses the openness and fundamental negativity of Dasein – its homesickness and vulnerability to all of the contingencies of its existence – is the ultimate, constitutively human activity. To understand that which is 'essentially' human is to understand the activity of philosophising and vice versa. To this extent, it is the *articulation of the question* of what it means to be human, rather than a positive definition of the human as a particular type of living species, that enables us to catch a glimpse of the essence of the human. As Heidegger remarks in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, given the necessarily vertiginous, encircling, 'perilously' ambiguous movement of philosophy, it is only when one is prepared to make themselves vulnerable to dizzying ambiguity that one is capable of glimpsing the 'centre' of the circle, of fully entering into the exercise of philosophising, and therefore of comprehending the essence of human existence.[51] Beistegui claims that insofar as the openness that engenders philosophising as the essence of the human is something 'in excess of' the idea of man as a living species, discovering anything 'essential' about the human is not an anthropological task.[52] The 'essence' of the human, in this sense, 'is itself nothing human,' that is, nothing 'hominid-like.'[53] Definitions of the human that are based on the idea that man is a primate amongst other primates have already presupposed an answer to the question of what the human being is. This approach, according to Heidegger, precludes any recognition of the essence of man as philosophising, as a meta-physical being. It fails to realise, as Beistegui says, that this essence 'exceeds' man's organic form. The anthropological outlook does not, therefore,

[51] Ibid. p.180
[52] Beistegui, M. *Thinking with Heidegger* p.13
[53] Ibid.

expose us to the ambiguity of our being and the coextensive ambiguity of philosophy. Instead, it shields us from the 'attack' of this more essential knowledge:

> [I]n the philosophical concept, man, and indeed man as a whole, is in the *grip of an attack* [Angriff] – driven out of everydayness and driven back to the ground of things. Yet the attacker is not man […] Rather *in philosophising the Da-sein in man launches an attack upon man*. Thus man in the ground of his essence is someone in the grip of an attack, attacked by the fact 'that he is what he is,' and already caught up in all comprehending questioning. Yet being comprehensively included in this way is not some blissful awe, but the struggle against the insurmountable ambiguity of all questioning and being.[54]

In the very pursuit of that which is essentially and constitutively human, we have therefore already surpassed the boundaries of anthropology because we have broken away from the domain of the 'natural' and opened ourselves up to concerns that go beyond the simple biological matter of the survival of our species. We have opened ourselves up to the 'abyssal' question of existence as such, to knowledge of the human as an 'originary openness to a constitutive and non-human otherness,' openness to beings, to *physis*.[55] It is the propensity for this type of openness, which is a requisite for *all* methods of determining the kind of being that the human is, that interests Heidegger. The question of the essence of the human is contained within this broader enquiry concerning *physis* and the human's relationship to it, which is ultimately an enquiry into the essence of metaphysics. This fundamental level of philosophical questioning, Heidegger says, necessarily comes '*prior* to all philosophical anthropology and cultural philosophy.'[56] It is on this basis that Heidegger claims that Scheler's anthropology,

[54] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §7 p.21
[55] Beistegui, M. *Thinking with Heidegger* p.13
[56] Heidegger, M. (1990) *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.192

which he sees as a fixed series of received presuppositions concerning man as a unity of life and spirit, must 'deny' Scheler 'any access to metaphysics.'[57]

Aside from attacking the conceptual origins of anthropology, Heidegger ascribes a general anthropocentrism to the methodology of the discipline. Buchanan describes the founding aim of philosophical anthropology as an attempt to '"return" humans back into the context of nature without necessarily naturalizing them.'[58] Though this vision claims to denounce anthropocentric biases, for Heidegger it is already operating at the whim of an implicit, and therefore all the more worrying anthropocentrism. This is because the anthropological approach assumes that we already know so much about what a human being is, including the boundaries that circumscribe our kind of being, that we can lift human existence from whatever context we find it in and reinsert it into a 'natural' setting. This notion is entirely opposed to Heidegger's claim that, from our own contingent human perspective, embedded in the nature that the sciences try to comprehend, we cannot possibly demand the detached, circumspective certainty that would allow us to scientifically delimit and positively define our species.[59] Though philosophical anthropology attempts to draw on and unify the findings of different disciplines in order to construct a complete description of the human, it remains, according to Heidegger, indebted to a culturally embedded emphasis on the life-spirit distinction. Heidegger claims in *FCM* that our philosophical matrix of knowledge about human beings has disaggregated itself since ancient times, and that anthropology, as a form of contemporary *Darstellung*, is a product of, rather than a remedy for, this disaggregation.

[57] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §46 p.192
[58] Buchanan, B. (2008) *Onto-Ethologies: The Animal Environments of Uexküll, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press p.66
[59] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §6b) β) p.19

These critical points concerning philosophical anthropology may explain Heidegger's hostility to it, but they do not explain why we are not offered any analysis of anthropology in *FCM*. If Heidegger wishes to reject the discipline so entirely, this surely calls for some critical engagement with it in order to assure his audience that anthropology is an aberrant path, and that his own approach is different and preferable. Heidegger does not see any profound affiliation between biology and his own philosophical project either, but we are still given a detailed delimitation of the field of biology and an explanation of its position on the metaphysical map that he traces in the lecture course.

Is it perhaps the case that Heidegger is wary of philosophical anthropology because he knows that, despite his dismissal of all anthropology as mere worldview, aspects of the discipline are echoed in his own approach? If, for example, we consider the Romantic overture to Herder's anthropology, which lays the groundwork for the entire philosophical-anthropological tradition, it is hard to ignore its echo in the rhetoric used in Heidegger's *Preliminary Appraisal*. For Herder, the Enlightenment project, in prioritising the cognitive, rational character of man, fails to grasp human existence as an expressive project of self-realisation through reflection and language.[60] In keeping with other figures from the Romantic period, Herder envisages a chaos at the heart of the human's relationship to nature, one that eludes the neat 'rational animal' account of human subjectivity.[61] It is for this reason that Herder turns to artistic modes of expression, particularly poetry, as the most original, most effective conduit of self-realisation. In a notably similar vein, at the opening of *FCM* Heidegger defends his use of the Romantic poet Novalis in his account of philosophy as homesickness by stating

[60] See Taylor, C. *Hegel* Chapter One: "Aims of A New Epoch"
[61] See Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" pp.80-82

that ‘art – which includes poetry too – is the sister of philosophy,’ whereas science is ‘perhaps only the servant with respect to philosophy.’[62] This claim appears to portray a corresponding Romantic sensibility in Heidegger’s thinking.

Given that precisely this kind of Romantic sensibility engenders philosophical anthropology in the late eighteenth century, and that this discipline is understood by Heidegger as a form of worldview, does this mean that Heidegger’s Romantically-influenced philosophical explorations in *FCM* could be construed as worldview-like? Is Heidegger avoiding saying too much about philosophical anthropology in the lecture course because he wishes to divert our attention from this parity? An alternative possibility is that Heidegger believes that the Romanticism that he makes reference to in *FCM* does indeed capture the original Greek meaning of human existence and of philosophy, and is not merely a progenitor of worldview. This would imply that philosophical anthropology, as the offspring of German Romanticism, may be more philosophically interesting than Heidegger thinks, or rather leads us to believe. Rather than betraying Heidegger’s analysis in *FCM* as located in the ‘worldview category,’ this possibility would imply that Romanticism and philosophical anthropology are located in the ‘philosophy category.’ However, if Heidegger does suspect that philosophical anthropology is worthy of interest, he certainly does not imply this in the lecture course.

We are beginning to see that despite its straightforward tone, there appears to be something mysterious about Heidegger’s appraisal of anthropology. Aspects of his own study in *FCM* seem to resonate with the German tradition of philosophical anthropology described in this chapter. Indeed, it is not just the Romantic motivations of the two projects that overlap, it is also their respective contents. Heidegger’s

[62] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §2b) p.5

formulation of his thesis on 'world-formation' clearly corresponds to Scheler's recently developed concept of 'world-openness' which forms the basis of 1920s philosophical anthropology. This affinity does not appear to be especially significant if we take Heidegger to be treating the thesis that 'man is world-forming' in the same manner as his thesis that the animal is 'poor in world,' i.e. as an articulation of the metaphysical prejudices that ground contemporary studies of spirit and life respectively. However, Heidegger does not extend this approach to his final thesis, or at least not in a straightforward manner. He does not seem to want to use the thesis that man is world-forming as a means for navigating and critiquing contemporary ontic-scientific determinations of the human.

In the case of Heidegger's engagement with biology and his explication of the thesis that the animal is poor in world, he appears to be both critical and agnostic at different points. However, Heidegger seems more explicitly to want to endorse the thesis that man is world-forming, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter. Given the proximity between the concept of world-formation and the philosophical-anthropological concept of world-openness, does this mean that Heidegger does in fact approve of, or is at least sympathetic to, the main principle of philosophical anthropology? In the following sections I will argue that there is, indeed, an important correspondence, unacknowledged by Heidegger, between the project of *FCM* and that of philosophical anthropology. If we examine this correspondence, which has several important dimensions that I have already begun to explore, Heidegger's insistence that *all* anthropology is a form of *Darstellung* founded on the life-spirit opposition, and that anthropology therefore precludes any understanding of philosophising as man's essential characteristic – of man as the 'meta-physical being' – becomes problematic.

Moreover, philosophical anthropology begins to look like an essential, unexploited resource that extends and enriches Heidegger's observations in *FCM*.

The concealed depth of philosophical anthropology and its unacknowledged proximity to Heidegger's project in FCM

i) The difficulty of summoning the 'courage' for philosophising and the unexploited resources of philosophical anthropology

The situation at this late stage in *FCM* seems disorientating, particularly when we look back to Heidegger's articulation in the introductory passages of his far reaching intentions for the lecture course, i.e. to bring us to the threshold of metaphysics so that we can embark upon the journey of philosophy from within our own contemporary situation. As I claimed in chapter two, *FCM* is presented in these passages as a kind of 'invitation to philosophise.' Prior to taking up this invitation, Heidegger insisted that we must first 'awaken' and become awakened to the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. His intention here was to familiarise us with our contemporary metaphysical framework — the fabric of which consists of sedimented conceptions of life and spirit which govern our thinking – so that we could learn how to retrieve the more essential knowledge that eludes and precedes this framework. We have now arrived at the depths of Heidegger's critique of the life-spirit division and of contemporary metaphysics generally. Heidegger has appraised *Kulturphilosophie* and biology, and has claimed that both are shaped and informed by a fundamental 'anthropological' worldview which, though it attempts to understand the human and its place in nature, ultimately serves to '[untie] us from ourselves.'[63] We can appreciate the direness of the situation from Heidegger's point of view when we consider that even the philosophical anthropology

[63] Ibid., 18c) p.77

of Max Scheler is rejected as yet another configuration of the life-spirit opposition. So how do we proceed from here? I wish to recall my earlier claim that, according to Heidegger, there are two possible responses to the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. Either we respond superficially to it by wedding ourselves to the anodyne declarations of science and worldview, or we can attempt to summon the 'courage of mood [*Mut*] for what this fundamental attunement gives us to know,' in other words, to 'listen to what it has to tell is,' and to '*really* question what this attunement gives us to question.'[64]

Having looked at the manner in which this attunement determines contemporary thought, how are we to know what we are 'listening out for,' and how are we to direct our questioning in a way that enables the deeper, more 'courageous' response to the contemporary situation? Heidegger spends so much time taking us through *Kulturphilosophie* and biology, and the manner in which they use the categories of life and spirit without questioning them in their origin, that we find ourselves hard pressed, at this point in the lecture course, to recall Heidegger's account of the more originary, more essential knowledge that he presents at the start of *FCM*. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, part of the difficulty here is that we have not been given a full picture of the 'spirit' side of the life-spirit dichotomy. We are provided with a disproportionate amount of detail on the 'life' side, leading readers to believe that life and animality must be the decisive issues here, despite the fact that Heidegger is far more ardent in his comments concerning the dangers of anthropology, the discipline of spirit.

[64] Ibid., §38b) p.167; §31a) p.139; §38b) p.167

Philosophical anthropology is an important missing link here not only because it would serve to fill in the 'spirit gap' in Heidegger's metaphysical account of the contemporary life-spirit distinction, but because it contains resources that could help return us to the ancient Greek concepts that Heidegger privileges. If we more closely examine the Schelerian anthropology that Heidegger quickly dismisses as a direct expression of the delusions of the contemporary situation, we can locate a profound resonance with Heidegger's own metaphysical agenda in *FCM*, and ultimately with the deeper ancient knowledge of the Greeks. Heidegger would of course deny any significant connection between the Greek perspective that he endorses and the all too contemporary analyses of philosophical anthropology. As I will soon demonstrate, Heidegger has his own way of steering us, from within the ravages of contemporary thinking on life and spirit, back towards the ancient understanding of man, *physis*, and philosophy. However, before looking at this attempt, I wish to emphasise the aspects of the connection between contemporary and ancient thought that Heidegger neglects. In particular I will argue that, had Heidegger looked with a more charitable, thorough, and imaginative eye at Scheler and the philosophical-anthropological tradition, he would have found that it is not only mindful and critical of the metaphysical prejudices that have been inherited throughout history, but that it reads, at certain points, like a direct re-articulation of the Greek conception of man as a being that 'speaks out' about *physis* from within *physis*.

In order to explore the relevance of philosophical anthropology for Heidegger's explorations in *FCM* we can begin by looking at the conceptual origins of the discipline. In its inception, philosophical anthropology attempts to break down the components of the human that have been wrought throughout the history of Western thinking. Its incorporation of the human body in its analysis is an attempt to re-unify the human being by overcoming what it considers to be an ontologically and

methodologically incoherent separation of body from spirit, reason and language. Zammito notes that for Herder, 'bringing thought back down to earth and concerning oneself with the whole man were the sum and substance of thinking in an enlightened manner about the problem of anthropology.'[65] We can recall that Herder's Romantic vision for anthropology is based on an intention to avoid the 'dissection' and 'objectification' of human nature.[66] In privileging *Besonnenheit* as the means by which human existence realises itself, Herder commits himself to the idea that the human's ostensibly 'extra-natural' capacities are simply expressions of its own peculiar form of life. *Besonnenheit* is understood by Herder as an impulse, one that 'compensates' for the human's absence of instinct with as much force as the impulses that compel bird migration or group hunting behaviour in lions.[67] *Besonnenheit* is a product of nature, and cannot therefore be located in a 'disembodied element.'[68]

There is a reverberation of this attempt to rethink traditional accounts of the human's place in nature and its own form of naturalness in Heidegger's critique of the divisions and categorisations that comprise the history of metaphysics. Though Heidegger does not follow Herder in pursuing an understanding of the peculiarities of the human body, he shares Herder's Romantic 'critical anxiety' concerning the compartmentalised concepts that we have inherited.[69] In a Heideggerian spirit, philosophical anthropology attempts to articulate its questions in a way that avoids the self-sundering dichotomies of Cartesianism, faculty psychology, and of materialist biology. It aims to retrieve the whole of the human being from out of the metaphysical compartmentalisation of these

[65] Zammito, J. (2002) *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press p.309
[66] Taylor, C. *Hegel* p.23
[67] Herder, J.G. "Treatise on the Origin of Language" p.81
[68] Taylor, C. *Hegel* pp.19-20.
[69] Seyhan, A. "What is Romanticism and where did it come from?" in Saul, N. (eds) (2009) *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.9

fields of enquiry. It therefore aims to reassemble, rather than isolate even further, the 'divergent' 'free floating' disciplines that, according to Heidegger, broke away from one another following the formation of Plato's Academy.[70] When considered in this way, philosophical anthropology does not look like a further disarticulation of the essential and primordial knowledge possessed by the Greeks. The discipline is more than a fragment of knowledge buffeted about on the sea of Western metaphysics; its entire aim is to emulsify the revelations of the history of philosophy with an empirically rich understanding of human morphology.

Though it seems anathema to Heidegger's thought, the necessity of this turn towards morphology in philosophical anthropology is one that Heidegger recognises and even anticipates in *FCM*. In his enquiry into Uexküll's theoretical biology, Heidegger poses the very question that motivates the entire philosophical-anthropological concern with the human organism. Heidegger notes that he sees great value in Uexküll's concept of the animal *Umwelt*, which avoids the dangers of mechanistic reductionism by recognising that the organism is not a closed system, but an entity that actively and continually responds to stimuli and forces dictated by its environment.[71] However, like the philosophical anthropologists, Heidegger sees Uexküll's *Umwelt* research as an essential but provisional stage of an investigation that must go far deeper.

Implicit in the concept of the *Umwelt*, Heidegger says, is the idea that different beings access different kinds of world.[72] Heidegger claims that this observation marks the 'decisive problem' with the Uexküllian approach.[73] We cannot take the concept of the

[70] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §10 p.35
[71] Ibid., §61b) p.264
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

surrounding world of the animal and use this model to describe the human world.[74] Though living beings may disrupt the physico-chemical categories employed by the mechanistic tradition to describe organisms, the human disrupts the more holistic organism-environment nexus described in *Umwelt* theory. As is the case with the philosophical anthropologists' reading of Uexküll, Heidegger's implication here is that the human cannot be properly understood if it is treated, along with other creatures, as an entity that is housed within a sealed segment of an ecosystem. For the human being does not possess the keen 'discriminatory capacities' that bind other organisms to their environments.[75] The human is not, therefore, the centrifugal nucleus of a specific habitat to which it is adapted and which governs its range of possible actions. We have seen that this divergence from Uexküll in Heidegger's thinking also takes place in philosophical anthropology; indeed, it marks its founding problematic. The philosophical-anthropological tradition, counter to Heidegger's representation of it, begins with the enigma of the human's peculiar separation from a natural environment, its 'existential liberation from the organic world – its freedom and detachability from the bondage and pressure of life, from its dependence upon all that belongs to life.'[76] Rather than confidently and simplistically positing the human as a living being plus some 'spiritual' capacity, as the site of a convergence between life and spirit as two discernible 'components,' philosophical anthropology begins with the more subtle observation that the human *subverts* the customary schemas used in biology to describe organisms, because its own mode of life is *itself* the vessel of a unique openness to world.

[74] Ibid., p.263
[75] Ibid., §46 p.194
[76] Scheler, M. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.52

This shared interpretation of Uexküll gives rise to a second, more important dimension of the affinity between Heidegger and the philosophical anthropologists. This affinity is based on the idea that man's organism is peculiarly vulnerable to sensations, to beings, to world. This philosophical-anthropological concept of world-openness as a capacity that emerges from nature, rather than from a non-natural 'spiritual' terrain, intersects Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek understanding of the human as a rupturing in *physis*, an opening through which *physis* realises itself in and through *logos*. Though they start out from different perspectives, with Heidegger eschewing all 'regional-ontological,' physiological determinations of human beings in favour of re-invoking a more primordial understanding from Greek philosophy, the outcome of the two currents of thought harmonise on this point: the human is envisaged in both as an opening in nature. According to Schelerian anthropology, the very ability of the human to take an attitude towards itself and to simultaneously discover and invent its reality is the most salient clue when it comes to questioning what it means to be human. This idea correlates in a striking way with Heidegger's claim that prior to any concrete theorising, human existence has always already exemplified its own singularity as an opening onto world, an opening in *physis* that is capable of taking in and questioning existence as such. In this respect, Heidegger says, human Dasein 'always already intrinsically brings the truth about itself along with it.'[77]

Insofar as it begins by isolating a coextensive openness in nature and openness to world as the condition for the possibility of all of the human's singularising traits – its inquisitiveness, language and self-interpretation – rather than presupposing its biological and ontological kinship to other animals, it does not seem to be the case that philosophical anthropology is straightjacketed, in the manner that Heidegger identifies,

[77] Ibid., §67 p.281

by the dictates of an anthropo-biological or 'spiritual-cultural-psychological' worldview. The philosophical anthropologists are not treating man as part of a biological continuum, nor as a rational animal, but rather as an entity that breaks through these categorisations and does so in an enigmatic manner, one that has not been accounted for by Darwinism or any other branch of modern biology. Scheler and Gehlen, taking cues from Herder, depict the human as a being that exists in a state of limbo. Its organism does not latch onto that which is organic, and it is therefore forced to negotiate, order and manage its openness, to 'develop an understanding of [itself].'[78] This idea corresponds with Heidegger's claims in *FCM* concerning the restlessness of man's situation. In the final section of the lecture course Heidegger describes man as 'that inability to remain' that is 'yet unable to leave his place.'[79] The 'Da-sein in him,' Heidegger says, 'constantly *throws* him into possibilities and thereby keeps him *subjected* to what is actual.'[80] A similar perspective can be seen in both positions, in which the human is depicted as the only type of being that must confront its existence, a being for whom entities are hyper-available, rather than available only insofar as they are relevant, and whose own being presents a burden, a 'difficult problem.'[81]

There is a further, related sense in which the philosophical-anthropological tradition expresses a Heideggerian principle, albeit using its own distinct vocabulary. This principle concerns the way in which, according to Heidegger, human Dasein comes to do metaphysics, that is, comes to question its existence and relationship to *physis*. Heidegger claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that it is only as a result of Dasein's

[78] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.65
[79] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §76 p.365
[80] Ibid.
[81] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.61

being 'gripped' that such questioning is possible.[82] As a being that originates in and is constituted by a breakage in *physis*, and is thus fundamentally 'attuned' to its existence by a kind of primordial nomadism, an essential 'homesickness,' the human must begin its enquiries by first finding a point of stability. This idea is akin to one that runs throughout philosophical anthropology, namely that the human organism is rendered vulnerable by an extreme receptivity to sensations, none of which directly capture its attention. According to the philosophical anthropologists, the human being must continually face up to the fact that its life is not wholly anchored in nature – that it is 'homeless' in the sense invoked by Heidegger – and that it must therefore find the means to stabilise itself and gain a grip on its life. Uexküll expresses this point when he claims that the infusorian, with its basic sensory world, 'rests more peacefully in its environment than does the child in its cradle.'[83]

This philosophical-anthropological conception of the human's unique morphology is expressed, according to Agamben, in the taxonomy of Linnaeus, in which the human species was first named *Homo Sapiens*. The term *Sapiens,* Agamben argues, was intended to express the Delphic maxim 'know thyself.'[84] It was not added as a description of this particular type of hominid, but was rather an 'imperative' taken from ancient knowledge.[85] Agamben claims that the human, according to this definition, 'has no specific identity other than the *ability* to recognise himself. Yet to define the human not through any *nota characteristica,* but rather through his self-knowledge, means that man is the being which recognises itself as such, that *man is the animal that must*

[82] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §2b) p.7
[83] Cited in Gordon, P. *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* p.75
[84] Agamben, G. (2004) *The Open: Man and Animal* trans Attell, K. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press p.25
[85] Ibid.

recognise itself as human to be human.'[86] Human existence is envisaged here not as a category in a taxonomy of beings, but as an ongoing, open-ended process of self-establishment. Landmann describes this strife at the heart of human existence:

> [T]hat he is not univocally determinate and may and must yet shape himself – is the basis of the effect that self-interpretation has on man's being. Self-interpretations become ideals and objectives that regulate self-formation […] Man is his own creator in two ways: he makes himself, and he also decides what to make of himself.[87]

This section has attempted to reveal the unexploited resources of philosophical anthropology, a field that is sensitive to many of the problems and questions that occupy Heidegger. The following section will attempt to solidify the connection between Heidegger's project and that of the philosophical anthropologists by exploring the shared Romantic origins and implications of their respective projects a bit further.

ii) The achievement of philosophical anthropology: Philosophy as *Trieb*

Heidegger's claim that philosophical anthropology is rooted in a derivative and non-essential understanding of life and spirit and their relatedness in human beings now seems to be somewhat unwarranted. When we consider the philosophical anthropologists' Herderian-inspired line of questioning, it does not appear to be the case that its conception of the human is grounded in a treatment of life and spirit as already-determined properties. The situation, upon close examination, appears to be the reverse. According to the philosophical anthropologists, it is the curious absence of orthodox biological principles that is conspicuous when it comes to examining the structure of the human being, and which demands that we question the human in new ways. The term 'life' is thus treated as the name for a series of problems and questions and not as the title of a specific domain of beings or a discernible sector of human existence. The

[86] Ibid., p.25-26
[87] Landmann, M. *Philosophical Anthropology* p.21

same applies to the term 'spirit.' The influence that Scheler has on subsequent works of philosophical anthropology, as can be seen in Gehlen's thought, lies not in the idea of spirit as a supersensible domain that levitates above life, but rather in the more basic idea that human action is curiously liberated by a retardation of instincts.

Scheler places spirit firmly within the context of human morphology, describing the human's spiritual capacities as 'illnesses' that only develop in 'hereditarily sick animals.'[88] Gehlen takes this 'morphologization' of the concept of spirit further, replacing the term altogether with a comparative physiology and close study of human action. Life and spirit therefore come on the scene in philosophical anthropology not as two readily determined traits, but rather as concepts that open up a series of questions about the being of the human. Gehlen follows Nietzsche in claiming that the human is the 'not yet determined animal,' a creature that we have yet to comprehend.[89] Though Heidegger would reject all definitions of the human that are founded on comparative studies of organisms, this statement does contain some resonance with his insistence that fixed, hierarchical conceptions of the human as a living being plus spirit, reason, or language are 'premature,' and that the being of the human is something that we have not yet succeeded in clarifying.[90]

We can identify the deepest point of the intersection between Heidegger's thought and that of the philosophical anthropologists by turning our attention to the Romantic inspiration and implications of both approaches. Taylor notes that 'nostalgia,' 'admiration' and 'even worship' for the Greeks formed the background of Herder's interpretation of the modern epoch and his development of a new anthropology.[91] In the

[88] Scheler, M. (1978) "On the Idea of Man" p.191
[89] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.60
[90] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §46 p.194
[91] Taylor, C. *Hegel* p.25

work of the philosophical anthropologists, we see an attempt to re-establish the Greek sense of the human's connection to nature, a connection that is thought to incorporate a painful discontinuity. The shift in Gehlen's thought towards an analysis of morphology is the residue of this Romantic attempt to grasp the reflective, linguistic openness of the human via an examination of the visceral, terrestrial, chaotic aspects of its connection to nature. This attempt, I wish to argue, is mirrored in Heidegger's invocation, at the opening of *FCM*, of the Novalisian concept of 'homesickness' as the essence of philosophising.

We can recall that in his elaboration of this homesickness, Heidegger cites Novalis's description of philosophy as an 'urge' (*Trieb*) to be at home. It is important to note Novalis's use, in his fragment, of the term *Trieb*, rather than *Sehnsucht*, denoting a visceral, non-deliberative desire, a bodily appetite rather than an activity of elevated contemplation and yearning. The implication here is that in order to understand philosophy, which is, in a sense, the most 'radically human,' counter-natural activity, we need to understand the manner in which this activity is staged within and through our own living being. The achievement of philosophical anthropology from Herder onwards resides in its ability to investigate the complex reciprocal relation between the human *qua* finite, living, breathing entity, and this apparently counter-natural propensity for reflection, for *Besonnenheit*, for philosophy. Philosophical anthropology thus appears to capture the ambiguity, the apparent intractability of the human's relationship to life, the life *in* the human, and the sense in which this life is *itself* the condition for the possibility of the human's stance within nature, its capacity to question the world to which it is open.

The philosophical-anthropological approach does, therefore, eventually arrive at Heideggerian territory: a conception of the human that is founded neither simply on

human biology, nor on the notion of a supersensible soul, but on an essential and constitutive 'openness.' The 'hiatus' within the human, the capacity for *Besonnenheit* that belongs to it most intimately, stems essentially from a natural 'unfinishedness,' an absence of characteristics.[92] This absence is conspicuous, Gehlen says, throughout the human body, from its retarded instincts to its weak musculoskeletal structure.[93] Despite the apparent distance between the philosophical-anthropological and Heideggerian projects, the former's perspective on the question of what it means to be human thus approximates Heidegger's conception of the human as the site of a negativity, a brokenness (*Gebrochenheit*) in *physis* that results in a primordial homesickness, which in turn impels the human to 'grip' onto entities, to philosophise and to forge a world of meaning for itself.

There are thus important dimensions in which philosophical anthropology develops an understanding of the human that is doxographically similar to the Greek conception as it is presented in Heidegger's thought. The two approaches are bound by a fundamental Romantic sensibility. The human is described in philosophical anthropology as a living being whose very materiality ejects it from that which is material. Human morphology, with its weak organs and blunt instincts, is such that the human is never able to immerse itself in the environments of other animals. The result of this scenario is that the human is open to the whole, to world, to its own being. Given this proximity to Heidegger, philosophical anthropology can therefore be said to contain the germ of something essential about human existence on Heidegger's terms. In claiming this I am not suggesting that philosophical anthropology cannot be contained within the history of contemporary thought that Heidegger critiques in *FCM*, or that it does not rely on the

[92] Gehlen, A. cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.62
[93] Ibid., p.63

concept of a division between life and spirit that stems, as Heidegger says, from a reductive reading of Nietzsche. I am instead arguing for an interpretation of philosophical anthropology that reflects my reading of Heidegger's claims concerning the philosophical potentiality of the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. Just as profound boredom can inspire either a superficial 'science-worldview' response, or a deeper, genuinely philosophical response, philosophical anthropology represents two distinct possibilities. It can be exploited unthinkingly, and used as a way of propping up an understanding of man as a complex of traits, some of which belong to life and some to spirit, or it can be utilised more profoundly as a way of galvanising the disparate approaches of various scientific and philosophical disciplines and of producing a biologically astute as well as philosophically curious account of the human.

iii) World-formation and world-openness

There is a further, very obvious connection between Heidegger's arguments in *FCM* and those of the philosophical anthropologists, one that I have already alluded to. This concerns Heidegger's use of the idea that man is 'world-forming.' It is a connection that deepens the air of mystery surrounding Heidegger's simultaneous critique and neglect of anthropology. Heidegger's presentation of this concept is clearly indebted to the concept of 'world-openness' that underscores the Schelerian perspective that he virulently rejects. Whereas Heidegger remains generally agnostic about the truth of the thesis that the animal is 'poor in world,' he seems to want to get behind the thesis that man is world-forming. In the following, final chapter I will demonstrate the manner in which Heidegger uses this final thesis more positively than his thesis on animals as a means for returning us to the ancient understanding of the human that he wishes to advocate. Does the fact that Heidegger endorses the thesis that man is world-forming provide further evidence that, counter to his critical assessment of anthropology, he

implicitly approves of the outcome of philosophical-anthropological research, i.e. the idea that man is essentially 'world-open'? At the heart of the contemporary thought that Heidegger critiques in *FCM*, which ostensibly operates according to the conceptual strictures of the life-spirit opposition which he takes to be the foundation of contemporary thought, the tradition of philosophical anthropology produces a principle that looks very similar to Heidegger's conception of world-formation.

It is in virtue of its propensity for world-openness that the human is characterised in philosophical anthropology as a 'self-forming' being.[94] This characteristic of self-formation is the outcome of the human's freedom from any particular environment. Having observed that the human exhibits this freedom, a freedom that stems from its possession of organs that are not sensitive to any environment in particular, philosophical anthropology proceeds to describe the human as '*world*-open' rather than 'environment-open.' The human being is presented not as a superior kind of ape, but rather as a completely different type of biological entity, one that seems to disestablish the organic traits and properties of other primates. Lacking in the biological attributes that enable survival in its closest relatives, the human is consequently opened onto a totality that is inaccessible to other creatures, a totality that is more than the sum total of physical environments on the planet. The human's freedom from an organic niche and corresponding organismic drives means that human life must, quite literally, organise itself.

I wish to suggest that, when it comes to the filiation between the concepts of world-formation and world-openness, the proximity between Heidegger and the philosophical anthropologists is critically important. Indeed, Heidegger's third thesis that man is

[94] Landmann, M. *Philosophical Anthropology* p.21

world-forming looks like a footnote to the philosophical-anthropological tradition and the concept of world-openness. From the perspective of the latter, the human body is not merely part of the process of world-openness, it is the condition for the possibility of it. If living beings exhibit a 'dominant character' amongst beings in general, the human exhibits a dominant character amongst living beings, not in a straightforwardly superior sense, but simply on account of its capacity to redirect its drives by suspending them, and thereby to create the space that is needed to form a world for itself. It is this biological capacity to suspend impulses in order to create a reflective space, which Herder terms *Besonnenheit* and Gehlen the 'hiatus,' that first enables world-openness according to the principles of philosophical anthropology.

This proximity between the concepts of world-openness and world-formation seems to imply that, having eschewed all anthropological perspectives, Heidegger positions himself close to the philosophical anthropologists by asserting that the human is 'world-forming,' and that, consequently, Heidegger would consider the philosophical-anthropological concept of world-openness to be a philosophically profound instance of anthropology. However, I consider this to be a matter of how we interpret Heidegger's thesis that man is world-forming. Heidegger could be using the concept in the same spirit as his use of the term 'world-poverty,' that is, as an expression of the delusions of modern metaphysics, delusions which, he argues, are the product of the peculiarly contemporary anthropological lens that man has constructed to view the world. If this is the case, then Heidegger is using the thesis as a way of opening up the question of our contemporary metaphysical prejudices, and not, as Krell believes, in order to place man on top of a hierarchical taxonomy of his own making. Alternatively, Heidegger could have a more profound use for his third thesis, namely to take the concept of 'world' that

it expresses and use this concept as a vehicle that can return us to the essential knowledge that we have strayed from.

In the following chapter I will argue that Heidegger considers the thesis that man is world-forming to contain both of these possibilities. What Heidegger fails to realise is that, just as his conception of world-formation can redirect us towards deeper philosophical knowledge, the philosophical-anthropological concept of world-openness is also an expression of this knowledge, despite belonging to the heart of the contemporary situation and ostensibly stemming from a preconception of the life-spirit divide. In this chapter I have attempted to show a side to the story of contemporary metaphysics that Heidegger leaves out, to put *philosophical* anthropology on the map in order replenish the 'spirit' side of Heidegger's life-spirit opposition. I have argued that when we survey its contents more closely, philosophical anthropology looks like a resource rather than a distraction when it comes to recovering the Greek knowledge that Heidegger privileges in the lecture course. In the following, final chapter I will return to Heidegger's version of the story, and look at his positive exploitation of the concept of world-formation.

Chapter Seven: Returning to 'essential' knowledge of the human, metaphysics and *physis*: Heidegger's use of the concept of 'world'

Heidegger's attempt to steer us back to ancient philosophical knowledge using the fundamental concept of 'world'

In the final stages of *FCM*, Heidegger demonstrates the manner in which we can travel upstream from the metaphysical quagmire of our situation in order to access deeper and more essential knowledge of the human, metaphysics, and *physis*. To facilitate this move, Heidegger considers it necessary to review what has been garnered from the study of our contemporary situation and its expression through the media of *Kulturphilosophie* and biology. Heidegger's hope throughout the lecture course has been that by coming to know the essential distinctions that arise in these fields in all their superficiality, we will enable ourselves to go deeper into the attunement of profound boredom, and to eventually replace the contemporary opposition between life and spirit with a more primordial understanding of the human and its status within *physis*. Heidegger's brief study in Part One of *Kulturphilosophie* revealed that the divide between life and spirit has become deeply culturally embedded in contemporary metaphysics, and his examination of biology served to furnish our understanding of this divide further. Now that we have looked in some detail at Heidegger's engagement with these branches of thought, it is finally possible to demonstrate the precise manner in which he will wrest something more essential from them.

i) The concept of world that emerges as a result of Heidegger's engagement with biology

I claimed in chapter five that Heidegger champions Jakob von Uexküll as a radical biologist who understands the conceptual limitations of biology. In Uexküll's biology Heidegger locates an Aristotelian holism that he finds far more illuminating than the instrumental conception of the organism. The idea that our understanding of the animal must also accommodate its environment, not as something added on, but as something that it always already accesses, corresponds to the Aristotelian conception of the soul laid out in *De Anima*. The soul is not an isolable property of the living entity that can be found inside it, one that serves a particular end, but is rather an end in itself, what McNeill describes as the 'primary entelechy of the living body.'[1] For Uexküll, the animal's relation to its *Umwelt* is likewise something that essentially belongs to its structure, not as an instrument that brings about particular ends, but as an intrinsic part of its being. David Storey claims that the presence of Uexküll in various aspects of Heidegger's reading of Aristotle is clear: 'Heidegger suggests that Aristotle, somewhat like Uexküll, sees the soul as the power or potential for comportment toward a world, as a kind of intentionality.'[2] Moreover, for Heidegger, Uexküll's analysis gets far closer to the original Aristotelian ethos of biology, an ethos which has been entirely obscured by mechanism. Biology, Heidegger says, 'has long been acquainted with the discipline called ecology. The word ecology derives from οἶκος, the Greek word for house. It signifies the investigation of where and how animals are at home in the world, of the way in which they live in relation to their environment.'[3] At the heart of the mechanistic

[1] McNeill, W. (2006) *The Time of Life: Heidegger and* Ēthos New York, NY: State University of New York Press p.15
[2] Storey, D. (2013) "Heidegger and the Question Concerning Biology: Life, Soul and Nature in the Early Aristotle Lecture Courses" *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* Vol. 18, 1, pp.161-186, p.172
[3] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.263

approach is a misconstrued interpretation of the role of biology, which has its roots in Darwinism. For within Darwinism, Heidegger says, the idea of the relation of an animal to its environment was 'understood in an external manner in light of the question concerning adaptation. In Darwinism such investigations were based upon the fundamentally misconceived idea that the animal is present at hand, and then subsequently adapts itself to a world that is present at hand, that it then comports itself accordingly and that the fittest individual gets selected.'[4] The force of this Darwinian perspective is responsible for what Uexküll describes as a suppression of the fundamental knowledge that an animal is a subject in possession of a world of its own.[5]

Thanks to his loyalty to the original ecological ethos of biology, Uexküll's work illuminates and delimits the field of biology as a study of the organism's relation to its environment, to its 'home.' Uexküll demarcates the boundaries of biology, a science which spreads throughout the animal kingdom but reaches a methodological nadir when it comes to dealing with the human being. If the organism is to be understood first and foremost as an opening onto an environment, as an entity that, to a greater or lesser extent, is capable of taking in a 'world' of its own, then world becomes a decisive concept in the metaphysics that underpins biology.

ii) From world-poverty to world-formation

Heidegger's enquiry into biology, which is framed by his thesis that the animal is 'poor in world,' results in a vague but nonetheless metaphysically intriguing concept of world. I wish to argue that when it comes to the thesis that the human is world-forming, Heidegger depicts the concept of world-formation in two ways. On the one hand he views the concept as contained within the history that he has been critiquing, and

[4] Ibid.
[5] Uexküll, J. *Theoretical Biology* p.204

therefore as a further expression of the split between life and spirit. This implies that, just as the concept of 'world-poverty' captured the approach of contemporary theoretical biology and zoology, the concept of 'world-formation' captures the entire philosophical-anthropological approach, including the concept of 'world-openness,' and is simply an expression of the overarching anthropological perspective. On the other hand, however, Heidegger's account of the concept is intended to invoke his earlier elaboration in the *Preliminary Appraisal* of the ancient, essential understanding of the human's metaphysical disposition and place in *physis*. Ultimately, this latter use of the concept of world-formation is the channel through which Heidegger will direct us back to this ancient understanding.

This 'deeper,' more positive manner in which Heidegger wishes to use the thesis on world-formation concerns his understanding of the concept of world that has emerged in the biological research of the time. Having looked at this research in some detail, Heidegger recalls that according to the metaphysics implicit in biology, living beings have an '*intrinsically dominant character* […] *amongst beings in general*' in the sense that they are constantly adapting to their 'encircling rings,' incorporating other entities into them.[6] Hence a lizard will integrate a rock into its environment insofar as the rock shows up as a surface on which to bask in the sun. It is in this regard that animals represent 'an intrinsic elevation' over the rest of nature from within nature.[7] We know that in the wake of Uexküll, the idea emerges that the human, unlike the animal, does *not* appropriate entities only insofar as they show up within a highly specific context. For the human, entities as well as the contexts into which they are brought are fundamentally open. We have seen that following Uexküll's *Umwelt* research, a

[6] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §66 p.278
[7] Ibid.

particular concept begins to gain serious traction, namely the idea that different kinds of being are opened onto different kinds of external world. Biology thus lays the groundwork for a deeper thematisation of the concept of world. In order to understand the contemporary development and metaphysical fruitfulness of this concept, Heidegger provides an appraisal of the concept of world being used.

We know, Heidegger claims, that according to the 'naïve,' natural concept of world, the term simply 'signifies *beings*.'[8] 'World' names the sum total of everything that there is, 'quite undifferentiated with respect to "life" or "existence."'[9] In his comparative examination, Heidegger argues that in contemporary metaphysics, distinctions begin to emerge between different kinds of world. 'Life' does not inhabit the world of 'spirit' and vice versa. If we look deeper into this basic distinction between life and spirit, we see that 'world,' according to the metaphysics that posits this life-spirit distinction, is not understood as the undifferentiated mass of entities depicted by the naïve conception. Instead, Heidegger argues that world begins to 'signify something like the *accessibility of beings*.'[10] The idea that world is, 'amongst other things,' the 'accessibility of beings' flies in the face of the 'natural' definition of world as the '*entirety of beings*, everything that there is, taken together' in the 'factical undifferentiatedness of everydayness.'[11]

Though this metaphysical understanding of world is not mobilised explicitly by the ontic scientists that Heidegger examines in *FCM*, it is implicit in their presuppositions. Heidegger wishes to emphasise that his own interrogation of the concept of world marks a deeper level of analysis that goes way beyond the reaches of this ontic

[8] Ibid., §68 p.284
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., §67 p.279

science.[12] If we decide to remain at the level of ontic science without staging a deeper interrogation of its metaphysics, we can simply stick with the idea that emerges in theoretical biology, i.e. that different entities appear to encounter their surroundings in a distinct manner, and that this entails some sort of hierarchical sequence of beings in which life and spirit are seen as separate. Heidegger claims that at its basis, this perspective reaffirms the idea of a fissure between life and spirit by conjecturing that the animal is poor in world whereas man is world-forming. From this point of departure, it then proceeds to produce biological and anthropological theories about the being of the animal and the being of man respectively, having already presupposed their essential characteristics. It uses the concepts of life and spirit like pieces of a puzzle, properties that can be added together in order to gain an understanding of different beings. The approach culminates, according to Heidegger, in Scheler's anthropology, which treats man as '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.'[13] This Schelerian perspective marks the pinnacle of the more superficial interpretation of the idea that man has his own distinct relationship to world, and 'denies' Scheler any 'access to metaphysics.'[14]

Despite the apparent metaphysical redundancy of this situation, Heidegger insists that if we take the initial principle that different beings inhabit and encounter world in different ways, and interrogate the concept of world that emerges here with more discernment and with greater philosophical imagination, we will discover a more profound understanding of the concept of world that is concealed in the 'crude'

[12] Ibid., §61b) p.263
[13] Ibid., §45b) p.192
[14] Ibid.

comparative examination.[15] Theoretical biology and anthropology, according to Heidegger, simply settle with an ordering of beings that is based on the derived, simplistic life-spirit categories. However, he contends that in spite of the philosophical impoverishment of their approaches, a more metaphysically significant concept of world can be wrested from it.

This more originary understanding of the concept of world consists, Heidegger says, in the idea that world signifies 'the accessibility of beings as such rather than beings in themselves.'[16] According to this idea, which, Heidegger says, is implicitly presupposed in contemporary ontic-scientific thinking, 'beings do indeed also belong to world, but only insofar as they are *accessible*, insofar as beings themselves allow and enable something of the kind. This is true only if beings as such *can become manifest*.'[17] The accessibility of beings thus depends upon this requisite capacity for 'manifestness.'[18] The contemporary understanding of the rift between man and life presupposes that this manifestness cannot occur for all beings in the same way. Otherwise, human beings and animals would stand 'over against a wall of beings with the same shared content, as though the animals amongst themselves and we amongst them simply saw the same wall of beings in different ways, as though we were simply dealing with manifold aspects of the same.'[19] Beings are not understood in this contemporary context as readily available for all types of entity. Instead, beings are first and foremost 'not manifest,' they are '*closed off* and *concealed*' and have to be made manifest in order to

[15] Ibid., §42 p.177
[16] Ibid., §67 p.279
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p.280
[19] Ibid., §66 p.278

become accessible, with some entities being more capable of this manifestation than others.[20]

Heidegger claims that if we examine its use carefully, the term 'world' here refers not to those beings that have already been made manifest, but rather to the activity of manifestness itself.[21] In other words, world pertains to the activity in which beings are removed from 'concealment' and made manifest.[22] We can thus begin to see a point of return to the more primordial, more essential Greek understanding in light of which Heidegger launches his project in *FCM*. This concept of world as the outcome of an act of 'unconcealment' immediately begins to re-invoke Heidegger's claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* concerning the Heraclitean concept of *physis* as essentially self-concealing, and of the human as the conduit of unconcealment. As the vehicle through which beings are wrested from concealment and are made manifest, the human is world-forming.

Once we establish this fundamental link between the material presented on world-formation in the later sections of *FCM* and the metaphysical explorations in the opening of the lecture course, other connections begin to emerge. Heidegger claims, for example, that the 'manifestness' that constitutes world is 'not a manifestness of just any kind whatsoever, but rather *manifestness of beings as such as a whole*.'[23] We can recall Heidegger's claim in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that, according to the most originary definition of *physis* – which came prior to all disciplinary fragmentation and prior to the modern life-spirit division – *physis* names both 'beings as a whole,' and 'beings as

[20] Ibid., §67 p.280
[21] Ibid., §68 p.284
[22] Ibid., §67 p.280
[23] Ibid., §68 p.284

such,' the beings that 'prevail' in *physis* as well as their 'prevailing.'[24] The latter side of this distinction, 'beings as such' or the 'prevailing of beings,' does not name a region of entities, but rather the essential nature of beings, their 'innermost essence,' whereas the former names the totality of beings.[25] The concept of world as 'the manifestness of beings as such and as a whole' therefore returns us to *physis* as the totality that incorporates both of these dimensions, the totality that is made manifest through world-formation.

Heidegger claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that Aristotle gathers these two dimensions of *physis* into a unified discipline known as 'First Philosophy.'[26] This First Philosophy, Heidegger says, is 'philosophising proper,' i.e. 'a questioning concerning φύσις in this dual sense: questioning concerning beings as a whole, and together with this, questioning concerning being.'[27] In Aristotle these concepts do not 'suppress one another,' they 'continue alongside one another.'[28] Heidegger claims that their reciprocal relation runs deeper than this:

> [T]hey are not only alongside one another, for the insight gradually awakens that *both meanings* which come to the fore in φύσις right from the commencement, albeit unaccentuated, express something equally essential and therefore persist in *that* questioning which in principle questions concerning the prevailing of beings as a whole: philosophy.[29]

Philosophy, in this original sense, does not treat the two dimensions of *physis* as separate subject matters. It would therefore not recognise the far narrower subdivisions of 'life' or 'spirit.' However, as I indicated in chapter two, Heidegger claims that this

[24] Ibid., §8d)α) p.30
[25] Ibid., §8d)β) p.31
[26] Ibid., §9 p.33
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., §8d) β) p.31
[29] Ibid.

original understanding of the reciprocity of 'beings' and their essential 'being' eventually breaks down into a conception of distinct fields of research in the ancient formation of philosophical schools. Philosophy no longer names an essential opening onto existence, a 'supreme' exercise in which beings are 'spoken out,' removed from concealment and articulated in their essence, but is seen as 'something for everyone to learn and repeat.'[30] Rather than retaining the profound ambivalence and interdependence of these two poles of *physis*, a basic distinction is carved within the totality of beings that there are in nature:

> With respect to these two fundamental orientations, the expression φύσις develops into these two fundamental meanings: φύσις as φύσει ὄντα, beings as they are accessible in physics, in the investigation of nature in the narrower sense, and φύσις in its second meaning as nature, just as we use this expression today whenever we speak of the nature of the matter, of the essence of the matter.[31]

From this conception of *physis* as the domain of 'natural' beings – that which 'forms' and 'passes away of its own accord' – a further domain of beings develops: those beings that develop as a result of *techne*, i.e. from 'human production' rather than from 'nature.'[32] This burgeoning distinction is solidified via the formation of academic schools into the fundamental distinction between *physis* and *ēthos*.[33] This division then gives way to the concept of a fissure between nature and man, between life and spirit. Beings as a whole – the 'form' that beings take, and beings as such – their 'essence' – eventually mutates into a conception of 'life' and 'spirit' respectively.

A closer look at the metaphysics that underpins contemporary biology and anthropology thus eventually leads us back to where we started in Heidegger's

[30] Ibid., §6b) α) p.16; §10 p.35
[31] Ibid., §9 p.34
[32] Ibid., §8d) α) p.31
[33] Ibid., §10 p.35

Preliminary Appraisal. We can, Heidegger hopes, replace the false dichotomy of life and spirit by rethinking *physis* as both the totality of beings and beings in their essence. The metaphysical conception of world that is unknowingly presupposed in contemporary ontic science is one in which world is understood as a kind of structuring of beings. Nonhuman animals may make certain beings manifest, for example, the lizard may be said to make the rock manifest, but this type of manifestness has a narrow range. The rock can be made manifest for the lizard as a warm surface on which to rest, or an object under which to seek shelter. In other words, this type of manifestness takes place at a local level, within an environment. Manifestness of beings 'as such as a whole,' on the other hand, is what it means to have a world rather than an environment, which ultimately means to be able to wrest beings from concealment rather than simply respond to them passively. The kind of being that has the capacity to enter into this dynamic of manifestness will be one whose structure is not already fixed and determined in advance, one that is therefore impelled to determine itself by disclosing beings as such and as a whole. There is a sense in which the 'ultimate' activity of philosophy that Heidegger describes in *FCM* is the exercise in which the manifestness of beings that occurs in world-formation reflects back on itself.[34]

When stripped back to their bare metaphysical suppositions, contemporary biology and anthropology, as the disciplines that develop out of the rigid ground of the life-spirit division, reduce to this understanding of world as manifestness. A large part of *FCM* has been a process of excavating the conceptual soil of these disciplines, with the result that, according to Heidegger, we have at least begun to grasp the contemporary understanding of world, the first of the three fundamental concepts of metaphysics. Thus far, the branches of thought that develop in conjunction with this fundamental

[34] Ibid., §6b) α) p.16

concept have been critiqued by Heidegger. The contents of biology and the anthropological perspectives of *Kulturphilosophie* have seemed from his perspective to be little more than confirmations of the misapprehensions of modern metaphysics. However, in this contemporary conception of world, Heidegger has begun to identify a deeper understanding of the most profound themes of the lecture course: of the human as a being that, in its finitude and solitude, is compelled to 'form' world, and of world, finitude and solitude as fundamental concepts of metaphysics, which also means fundamental concepts of Dasein as the being that speaks out of *physis* and in which these fundamental concepts are united.

An understanding of this tapestry of concepts – Dasein, *physis*, philosophy, world, finitude and solitude – eventually begins to emerge from within Heidegger's engagement with the delusions of modern metaphysics, despite the fact that this tapestry of concepts eludes the various channels of thought that Heidegger examines in his engagement. Having forayed into *Kulturphilosophie* and ontic science in order to understand what we are up against, Heidegger has begun to get us back on track by showing us the difference between the derivative, stratified metaphysical categories that we unwittingly employ, and a more ancient, genuinely philosophical mode of thinking.

In the *Preliminary Appraisal* Heidegger cites Plato's claim in *The Republic* that 'the difference between the philosophising human being and the one who is not philosophising is the difference between being awake (ὕπαρ) and sleeping (ὄναρ).'[35] The contemporary age of science and the 'proclamations of worldview' found in *Kulturphilosophie* has been one of 'non-philosophising' in this sense. Heidegger claims that the 'non-philosophising human being, including the scientific human being, does

[35] Ibid., §7 p.23

indeed exist, but he or she is asleep. Only philosophising is wakeful Dasein, is something totally other, something that stands incomparably on its own with respect to everything else.'[36] Here Heidegger anticipates the philosophical futility of contemporary attempts to order and compare beings, to place man and life within a predetermined schema of entities for the sake of ascertaining their distinct traits. As the only being that 'speaks out of the whole and into it,' the only being capable of disclosing beings as such and as a whole, the being of Dasein cannot be captured by these orthodox methods of ordering and stratifying beings.[37] There is a sense in which this type of comparative stratification serves to keep Dasein asleep by presenting it with convenient and comforting categorisations with which to comprehend itself. At the start of *FCM* Heidegger claimed that his intention was to 'awaken' us to the fundamental attunement that characterises our age so that we might eventually recognise its philosophical potency. In these final stages of the lecture course Heidegger hopes that we can finally be roused from the somnolence of our metaphysical situation, that we can respond to the fundamental attunement of the contemporary age positively and courageously, and that we can, at last, take up his invitation to philosophise.

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., §75 p.353

Conclusion: The ape of metaphysics

In this thesis I have aimed to provide an original, alternative reading of *FCM*, one that demonstrates the philosophical impact of the lecture course by presenting the metaphysical stage on which Heidegger is working in its full depth and scope. If we read the whole of *FCM* we discover a very different interpretation of the lecture course to that presented in the Krellian reading. Rather than simply discovering a reinstallation of classical hierarchies of beings, we find something far more interesting. The lecture course poses a direct challenge to us not just as philosophers, amateur or advanced, but as human beings, namely that we engage in a conflict with the soporific, long-sedimented trends of contemporary thinking in order to re-enliven a deep understanding of ourselves – 'the *Da-sein* in us' – and our situation.[1] Heidegger claims that this task demands a sensitivity to our prevailing metaphysical attunement, the skill to recognise the derived patterns and concepts that make up the fabric of this attunement, and the 'courage' to look beyond the comfort that this orthodox way of viewing the world and ourselves provides.[2] Heidegger challenges us to no longer swallow the metaphysical nostrum of the anthropological worldview, which serves only to further blunt the philosophical instincts that have been compromised since the genesis of philosophy in ancient Greek thought. This process of 'awakening' a philosophical attitude in us requires a direct confrontation with the insecurity of Dasein's position within *physis*, its status as a 'meta-physical' being. Heidegger claims that this confrontation, the potentiality of which is dormant in the fundamental attunement of profound boredom, entails Dasein experiencing the 'terror' (*Entsetzen*) of its circumstances. However, Heidegger tells us, in one of the final sentences of the lecture course, that it is only by

[1] Ibid., §76 p.366
[2] Ibid., §38b) p.167

'being seized by terror' that we 'find the bliss of astonishment – being torn away in that wakeful manner that is the breath of all philosophising, and which the greats among the philosophers called ἐνθουσιασμός.'[3]

It is only by doggedly sticking with Heidegger throughout the lecture course – from his interpretation of the unique profundity of Greek thought, through his exhaustive account of the murkiness of the contemporary fundamental attunement of profound boredom, into the analysis of biology and the worlds of lizards, bees and falcons, and finally to the question of man, world-formation and the meaning of metaphysics – that we can appreciate the full philosophical drama of *FCM*, which ultimately aims to bring us to this point of 'enthousiasmós.' The lecture course is not, as Katherine Withy has suggested, an attempt by Heidegger to offer us 'therapeutic' relief from the pains of profound boredom.[4] On the contrary, Heidegger is encouraging us to suspend our attempts to palliate our situation using the therapeutic epics of *Kulturphilosophie* and science, and to instead summon the courage to philosophise, which necessarily means confronting ourselves directly.

If the conceptual origin and outcome of the lecture course is indeed as I have presented it here, how come such a radically different approach is witnessed throughout the secondary literature that I discussed in chapter one? From the perspective of this secondary literature, my reading may seem like a far too charitable interpretation of Heidegger's notorious remarks concerning animality in Part Two. There are several things to say about this. Firstly, it is difficult to assess how proponents of the Krellian reading would respond to the wider metaphysical context of *FCM* – the scene-setting

[3] Ibid., §76 p.366. Ενθουσιασμός (enthousiasmós) is translated as 'enthusiasm, zeal, inspiration.'
[4] Withy, K. (2013) "The Strategic Unity of Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*" in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 51, 2, pp.161-178 p.162

that takes place in the *Preliminary Appraisal*, the discussion of boredom and *Kulturphilosophie*, and the return in the final passages to an explicit discussion of metaphysics and of Dasein as the meta-physical being – because these proponents do not include these aspects of the metaphysical context of *FCM* in their critiques of Heidegger's comparative examination. Secondly, I would argue that, whether or not we wish to commit ourselves to Heidegger's conception of fundamental attunements as forces that determine the tenor of an entire epoch, we need to take seriously the widespread affective power of different phases in scientific research, and the manner in which these different phases shape and inform the prevailing zeitgeist. Krell's reading takes place in a radically different 'time' with respect to developments in the life sciences than that of the early twentieth century. I claimed in chapter five that the phase in biology that Heidegger is responding to in *FCM* is one in which biology enjoys a far closer engagement with philosophy. At the beginning of the twentieth century genetics was in its infancy, as was the field of primatology, a discipline that is also responsible for nursing a profound cultural awareness of the genetic kinship between the human and its anthropoid ape cousins. Darwinism, far from being the grand narrative of all biology, was treated by many of the greatest biologists of the age as a materialist hypothesis that did not offer a successful account of organismic function, and alternative biological theories that appear to designate metaphysical distinctions between beings were received with far more attention and interest.

In Krell's day, by contrast, the discovery of the biochemical formulation of DNA is over half a century old, the human genome has been decoded and the concept of life has been both molecularized and digitised. Biology has long since strayed from any deeply informative engagement with philosophy into the domain of information technology. The idea that such concepts as the opposition between 'life' and 'spirit' could form the

core of our approach to nature now seems deeply alien. The contemporary technoscientific age is one in which, as Moss claims, we wish to 'embed' the human more deeply than ever into the 'ontological democracy of the garden.'[5] However, the more labyrinthine ontology of early twentieth century life science, cultural psychology and anthropology made for a very different research climate. Heidegger is justified in his insistence that he is not proffering 'private opinions' of his own in Part Two of the lecture course, but is instead delivering the metaphysical content of different contemporary disciplines.[6] In contrast to this earlier phase, the modern zeitgeist of Krell's day is one in which it is *de rigueur* to deny any absolute difference between the human and nonhuman animals. The ever increasing amount of information that is available concerning human heredity problematizes all claims regarding the uniqueness of the human. As Weiss says, in the modern, principally naturalistic approach to the question of the human being's status within the biosphere, 'the human being is eliminated as the unique object of study,' because 'human nature' is considered to be 'completely accountable according to the same principles by which we account for any piece of nature.'[7] Such categories as life, spirit, mechanism and vitalism are ironed out and replaced with the far flatter ontology of genetic data. For Heidegger, this represents a new phase in the history of metaphysics, as boredom eventually gives way to nihilism. Heidegger will describe this phase in later works as the age of technology, the 'epoch of the total lack of questioning,' which saddles man with a whole new way of relating to reality.[8]

[5] Moss, L. (2014) "The Hybrid Hominin and the Metaphysics of Detachment," paper presented at the Rice Seminar: *Materialism and New Materialism Across the Disciplines*, Rice University, Houston, TX.
[6] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §61b) p.261
[7] Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.28
[8] Heidegger, M. (2000) *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning* trans. Emad, P. and Maly, K. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press §50 p.76

Once again, I wish to emphasise that whether or not we commit to Heidegger's idiosyncratic interpretation of the mutations in fundamental attunements that make up the history of metaphysics, it is important to acknowledge the affective force of contemporary molecular-genetic conceptions of the human and its place in nature. It is unsurprising that, working from within this modern 'optic,' those who pick up *FCM* will zone in on Heidegger's comparative examination and find in it an ill-founded, bombastic set of claims that unjustifiably separate the human from the animal. According to this modern view, nothing is more unwarranted than breaking up the smooth matrix of genetic data, the beautiful simplicity of the idea that all organisms can be understood according to a similar genetic algorithm.

In highlighting the significance of this current approach to life I do not intend to valorise it in any way, I simply wish to emphasise the importance of the context in which modern readers pick up *FCM*. The two points above are not being offered as caveats intended to nullify all charges that Heidegger's comparative examination is hierarchical. As I indicated in chapter one, if we read Heidegger's three theses 'cold,' in isolation from their wider context, they will certainly appear to be endorsing an unpalatable hierarchical metaphysics. However, I have argued throughout this thesis that Heidegger is not in any sense using the comparative examination in this manner, that is, to institute, reinforce or extend a conception of the human's separateness from and superiority over nature. Instead he is deriving the fundamental metaphysical suppositions that ground *Kulturphilosophie*, biology and anthropology in order to familiarise us with the dominance of the life-spirit opposition, to bring the metaphysical spectres that form the basis of our knowledge into the open and, from there, to begin to recover more essential knowledge.

There is a third important point to be made concerning the Krellian reading and its claim that Heidegger privileges the human over the animal in *FCM*. According to my alternative reading, *FCM* does not lift the human out of nature, and in fact sets out to do the very opposite. If we read *FCM* in its entirety, we find that the conception of man, *physis* and metaphysics that develops out of it is one that directly addresses the human's complex connection to nature, rather than its detached elevation over it. According to Heidegger's revision of the meaning of 'metaphysics,' the term does not denote a 'going beyond' in the sense of the supersensible, but rather a turning 'toward beings in general and toward that being which properly is.'[9] 'This *turnaround*,' Heidegger says, 'happens in philosophy proper,' that is, the 'supreme' occurrence that constitutes the deepest aim of the lecture course.[10] *FCM* amounts to an attempt to provide a stage for this 'turn toward' beings, which essentially means turning toward our own being. Heidegger is in pursuit of the most basic dilemma of human existence, namely its coextensive terrestriality and liberation from that which is terrestrial, the manner in which it speaks out about *physis* from within it. Philosophy, understood as the most quintessentially human, counter-natural activity, stems, according to *FCM*, from nullity, lack, need, violence and 'terror.' The world of Dasein is essentially fractured insofar as Dasein is at the perpetual whim of its temporality and finitude. Heidegger claims that the 'withdrawal' of world in profound boredom is the withdrawal of all beings, past, present and prospective.[11] The world of Dasein is not a neat capsule of entities that are always available, it is 'ruptured' by a fundamental finitude that impels it to develop its own anchoring in *physis*.

[9] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §11b) p.39
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., §32a) p.145

It is in this sense that Heidegger describes man as 'that inability to remain' that is 'yet unable to leave his place.'[12] It is in the process of world-formation that the burdensome fact of existence '*throws*' Dasein into possibilities and, in so doing, constantly 'subjects' it to reality.[13] The activity of metaphysics is described as the most extreme version of this subjection, of this forceful impulse to remain open to and reflect upon the contingencies of existence. The provenance of philosophy, Heidegger says, is this restless, perpetual failure to maintain a tight, insoluble connection to beings. Heidegger claims that philosophy as 'this love of… as homesickness for…, must maintain itself in nothingness, in finitude.'[14] Philosophy is therefore 'the opposite of all comfort and assurance. It is turbulence, the turbulence into which man is spun, so as in this way alone to comprehend Dasein without delusion.'[15] The majority of *FCM* is dedicated to systematically stripping away the delusions that maintain contemporary Dasein in its 'comfort and assurance' so that genuine philosophising can commence. The failure of the Krellian reading is that it mistakes Heidegger's account of these delusions for Heidegger's 'own voice,' for his own particular understanding of the human and its place in nature. Unsurprisingly, this results in Heidegger being charged with precisely the kind of hierarchical conception of man that he is aiming to deconstruct and critique in his appraisal of the contemporary use of the life-spirit distinction. However, Dasein is described in *FCM* as a being that only comes to philosophy in the first instance because it is constituted by a fundamental nullity which prompts it to gain a grip on entities via a fundamental attunement. Dasein is characterised as a being that is in constant 'transition,' rather than as the fixed pinnacle of nature.[16] This constant

[12] Ibid., §76 p.365
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., §6b) β) p.19
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., §2b) p.6

transition is the result of the temporality that 'enraptures' Dasein and maintains it in its tenuous condition:

> Man is *enraptured* in this transition and therefore essentially '*absent.*' Absent in a fundamental sense – never simply at hand, but absent in his essence, in his *essentially being away*, removed into *essential having-been* and *future* – essentially absencing and never at hand, yet *existent* in this essential absence.[17]

This constitutive aspect of Dasein's being is concealed within the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. The 'telling refusal' (*versagen*) of beings in this attunement highlights the constitutive insecurity that Dasein embodies as a temporal being. '*Transposed* into the possible,' Heidegger claims that Dasein must constantly be '*mistaken* concerning what is actual.'[18] The philosophical potentiality of boredom in this sense is not a novel, isolated occurrence in the history of metaphysics. Because Dasein must take on the burden of forming world for itself it will always be open to the risk of being 'mistaken' (*versehen*). However, Heidegger insists that treading this line of constant risk results in the 'terror' that opens up the possibility of philosophising.[19] This terror amounts to a full awareness of the homesickness that Heidegger refers to in the *Preliminary Appraisal* as the 'fundamental attunement of all philosophising.'[20]

Krell insists that *FCM* does an uncanny violence to animal life, that it 'mutilates the ape with all-too-human pieties' and that 'stages, steps, or levels in being' 'haunt' Heidegger throughout the lecture course.[21] The 'ostensibly unified field of φύσις,' Krell says, 'will crack and deracinate in order to expose strata in being' despite Heidegger's efforts.[22] In this assessment Krell misses the fact that any violence contained in *FCM* is directed

[17] Ibid., §76 pp.365-366
[18] Ibid., p.366
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., §2b) p.5
[21] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.315; pp.127-128
[22] Ibid., pp.128

towards human existence, not towards the animal. The enquiry into animal life is relatively marginal; Heidegger has a logistical use for this material, but it is not part of the central thrust of the lecture course. Heidegger wishes to deploy the sections on animality as a demonstration of the contemporary understanding of life as a category that is seen in opposition to spirit in order to begin to shed this delusion and replace it with a more essential understanding of Dasein as a unity of world, finitude and solitude, as the site of a rupturing in *physis* and as a potentiality for philosophising. From this perspective it is Dasein, and not the animal, that is the recipient of an act of mutilation in *FCM*. It is Dasein that constitutes a cracking within *physis*, Dasein that suffers a brokenness within its own structure that forces it to 'tear' beings from concealment, to 'steal' truth in order to construct a world of meaning for itself.[23] Those aspects of life that Heidegger reserves for Dasein – language, sociality, selfhood, temporality and death — are really by-products of this rupturing; they are the necessary correlates of a fundamentally fragmented and self-forming existence. Heidegger closes the lecture course with the claim that the genuine philosophising that he has attempted to facilitate is one in which Dasein is 'torn away' in a 'wakeful manner,' torn from the tranquillity of its worldviews, the depths of its metaphysical deception, into an acute alertness in which it faces up to its circumstances: its compulsion to form a world, the solitude in which it must assume this burden, and the finitude that determines all aspects of its existence.

How convincing is this depiction of the human as a peculiar lacuna in nature to the modern reader? As I have already emphasised, it certainly goes against the general contemporary trend of homogenising all living beings using genetic information. However, I wish to suggest that it is not an outmoded or spurious idea. The sheer

[23] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §8c) p.29

volume of genetic data now available provides a useful 'one size fits all' model for understanding living beings, including the human. However, I wish to agree with Heidegger that the extension of this model to all natural phenomena is the result of a biologically convenient but highly localised and ultimately philosophically limited and non-curious understanding of beings, one that operates, like the fragmented philosophical disciplines that formed following the establishment of Plato's Academy, with its own hermetically sealed 'methodological schema of question and proof.'[24] Nowadays biology has subdivided further into systems biology, molecular biology, human biology, cell biology, ethology etc. Philosophy *of* biology is recognised as a subdiscipline of philosophy, but there is far less of a reciprocal intimacy between biology and philosophy, the kind of intimacy that gives rise to philosophically rich conceptions of nature and of the human's place in it. I therefore wish to return, one last time, to this fertile phase in biological and anthropological research in order to lay the groundwork for an approach that places Heidegger's understanding of man as a lacuna in *physis* into the context of *philosophically* rich empirical studies of the human.

In chapter six I argued that there is a striking proximity between the conception of the human that Heidegger develops in *FCM* and the German philosophical-anthropological interpretation of man as world-open. A significant aspect of this proximity pertains to the Romantic leanings that are traceable throughout both approaches. I wish to close this thesis by extending my claims concerning the affinity between Heidegger and the philosophical anthropologists a bit further. By now we are familiar with the fact that Heidegger would reject any such relation because, as a branch of contemporary *Darstellung*, philosophical anthropology is simply another manifestation of the life-spirit divide, and is therefore a further expression of the derivative, blinkered,

[24] Ibid., §10 p.37

overwhelmingly anthropological contemporary worldview. However, I have been arguing that, had Heidegger examined the content of philosophical anthropology more thoroughly, he may have identified another possible interpretation of it. If we take a brief glance at the surface of Scheler's anthropology we will find a conception of man as a being that embodies both life and spirit. Heidegger claims that subscribing to this view means that we will remain in the vortex of worldview rather than metaphysics, and will continue to order beings in terms of the concepts of life and spirit. However, as I have already begun to demonstrate, when we take a closer, more cautious look at Scheler we discover something far more insightful.

Scheler sets the tone for a morphologically rich enquiry into man, one that germinates in Herder and continues to be worked out by the philosophical anthropologists of the 1920s and beyond. This philosophical anthropology provides a description of the human as a being whose own form of life, whose own breed of 'naturalness' is counter-natural, biologically aberrant in its biological form. The human is seen in this philosophical anthropology as a morphological mystery based on such factors as its musculoskeletal weakness, absence of instincts, long gestation and nursing period. These traits are notably absent in other members of the *Hominidae* family. It is no surprise for the philosophical anthropologists that the human constantly and forcefully compensates for these strange lacks by means of reflection, self-interpretation and language. The human is the ape of metaphysics, the only primate that is incapable of being intimate with its natural environment and survival resources, the only ape that is unwittingly compelled to reflect on the burden of its existence. Ortega describes this peculiarity in the human as it is presented in philosophical anthropology as the most 'anti-natural' and yet 'ultra-biological' of phenomena.[25] The lacerations that nature

[25] Cited in Weiss, D. *Interpreting Man* p.166

forges in human biology overflow with a distinct kind of openness. Unhinged from all organic habitats, the human must, Ortega claims, make do without the 'somnolence' that the animal enjoys and must live in a state of 'permanent wakefulness,' an insomnia that is 'at times terrible and uncontrollable.'[26]

In this philosophical-anthropological perspective we gain a kind of morphologization of Heidegger's conception of man's position in *physis*, an empirically rich and intriguing sense of the 'natural counter-naturalness,' the coextensive terrestriality and 'existential liberation' of human existence. This grounding of the concept of world-openness in human morphology is not a whimsical attempt to justify human uniqueness. It is based largely on the theory of human neoteny which was first developed in the early twentieth century anatomy of Julius Kollman.[27] Neoteny plays a significant role in the philosophical anthropology of the 1920s onwards, and retains its explanatory importance to this day.[28] Neoteny is based on the idea that an organic 'prematurity' forces the human organism to develop in supererogatory ways. Though the theory is developed in biology, it re-invokes Herder's reflections on the weak and juvenile character of human life.[29] In Gehlen's anthropology, neoteny is cited as an explanation for human plasticity and action, in other words for the human's world-openness. This trait is described in accordance with the theory of neoteny as a 'biological necessity that corresponds to the retrogressive metamorphosis of human organs, or, better, to the human being's lack of organs, to the human being's non-specialisation and capacity for action.'[30] The human's very survival depends upon its capacity to re-establish 'the lost

[26] Ibid., p.164
[27] See Bufill et al. (2011) "Human Neoteny Revisited: The Case of Synaptic Plasticity" *American Journal of Human Biology*, Vol 23, 6, pp.729-739, p.729
[28] Ibid.
[29] See Montagu, A. (1981) *Growing Young* New York, NY: Greenwood Press *Appendix: The History of Neoteny*
[30] Gehlen, A. (1988) cited in Honneth, A. and Joas, H. *Social Action and Human Nature* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p.53

link between instinct and response-triggering stimulus on the higher plane of behavioural patterns that have been so routinized that they have become analogous to instinctual behaviour.'[31]

In spite of this evidence from the fields of biology and comparative zoology, those who share the Krellian anxiety concerning the ascription of *any* type of unique property to the human are likely to receive my concluding observations with scepticism. Heidegger's conception of human existence as an activity in which *physis* apprehends itself through a process of rupturing and unconcealing, and my articulation of this idea through the vocabulary of philosophical anthropology and the 'metaphysical ape,' may excite Krell's objection that the version of human existence that comes out of *FCM* is essentially no different from classical accounts that are 'expressed in terms of addition, subtraction or privation.'[32] This is because *FCM* appears to retain the idea that the human is an exceptional being in nature. This preservation of human uniqueness may seem to be a reconfiguration of hierarchies in which man is positioned above life. This Krellian sensitivity to anthropocentric, ontotheological interpretations of the human is warranted and laudable; it is an attempt to avoid the ultimate metaphysical bias, namely that life is comprised of lesser versions of the human. As an authority on the concealed danger of metaphysical prejudices, Heidegger would surely want to avoid all assignments of human uniqueness.

However, I have argued that Heidegger's account does not arrive at human existence by adding to life, nor does it try to exempt the human from life altogether. The interpretation of the human's relationship to *physis* that Heidegger presents in *FCM* distorts rather than reinforces traditional hierarchies; Heidegger is describing the point

[31] Ibid., p.57
[32] Krell, D.F. *Daimon Life* p.104

of continuation between the human and *physis*. The rupturing that constitutes Dasein's activity of speaking out is not a rupturing that Dasein inflicts upon nature in the spirit of mastery. Rather, this rupturing occurs within *physis*, amongst beings. Beings tend to elude unconcealment by hiding themselves. It is in this sense that the process of unconcealment has to be rupture, an interruption of the self-concealing drive of beings. Heidegger claims that this interruption is not made possible by the human; he does not attribute it to a non-natural 'spiritual' capacity on the part of man. On the contrary, it is a possibility that resides within *physis*, with beings themselves. For if beings were not somehow amenable to unconcealment, this interruption would be impossible, and all of Dasein's attempts to disclose beings would be redundant.[33]

I noted in chapter two that Heidegger follows Heraclitus in this description of beings as fundamentally self-concealing. Heidegger claims that this self-concealing tendency of entities depends upon their more essential drive towards unconcealment, because entities can only hide insofar as there is a possibility of their being pursued and revealed. Heidegger claims that 'insofar as man exists among' beings, insofar as *physis* incorporates man, beings will find fulfilment through being articulated by him.[34] This dynamic of unconcealment is a reciprocal relationship in which beings are realised *via* this corruption of their self-concealing urges. Beings acquire something from Dasein's unconcealing activities, and Dasein, *qua* Dasein, is drawn into and bound by its propensity for unconcealment, its obedience to the process of uncovering beings.

We therefore have a parallel rather than a stratification, a state of delicate and ambiguous balance rather than a straightforward superiority of one terrain of beings over another. Dasein can only seek out its own realisation within a context of clearing

[33] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §67 p.279
[34] Ibid. §8b) p.26

and unconcealing, a process that depends upon its continuity with a range of entities that are amenable to being 'spoken out.' Dasein is the vessel through which beings come to be realised through the *logos*, but as a being within *physis* it is not liberated from the governing natural drive towards concealment. Heidegger claims in the *Preliminary Appraisal* that it is precisely because the human conceals *itself* as a being within *physis*, and must 'tear' itself from concealment as it does with other beings in its attempt to disclose *physis* as such and as a whole, that it is exemplary of *physis*.

What may look at first like signs of a total break between Dasein and *physis* are therefore instances of a continuity between the two. The exercise in which Dasein tears itself from *physis* in order to initiate the unconcealment of beings is simply an example of self-rupturing, and hence of *physis*. Dasein's habit of covering over and fleeing from its metaphysical predisposition, a habit that Heidegger examines throughout *FCM*, is likewise a sign of Dasein's continuity; it is the form that Dasein's self-concealment takes, the 'natural' course of its existence as a being within *physis*. There are multiple examples of sectors of *physis* that are not replicated elsewhere, natural traits that are peculiar to only one type of entity. For Heidegger, Dasein's urge towards speaking out is different from these other manifestations of natural behaviour only insofar as it encompasses a difficulty and a melancholic pathos that is spared to all other entities; it is not to be interpreted as the enactment of a privilege.

I have argued that the Romantic element of this conception of human existence is traceable in both *FCM* and philosophical anthropology. The mystagogical, Romantic tone of Herder's thought, which is the inspiration of this Romantic element, may seem to threaten my argument that the 'metaphysical ape' is a biologically legitimate, non-valorising and non-hierarchical concept. However, Herder's Romantic speculations are well substantiated by early twentieth century studies of neoteny and comparative

zoology. These empirical analyses, which are exploited and extended by the philosophical anthropologists of the twenties, produce a biologically sound conception of the human organism as the ultimate expression and evidence of man's peculiarity in nature. To the extent that Heidegger's musings on human existence as a painful breach in nature also share this Romantic inflection, they also partake of these far reaching empirical implications. In *FCM* Heidegger reaches the shores of an understanding of the human as a metaphysically and biologically liminal organism, a being that, as Mulhall says, exists at an 'essentially enigmatic, uncannily intimate distance' from its nonhuman relatives on account of its openness, an openness that is at once ontological and organic.[35]

Having charged Spengler et al. with dramatic, Romantic-sounding claims concerning the fate of man, it may appear hypocritical of Heidegger to implicitly incorporate Romantic intuitions regarding the human's character and place in nature into his own study. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, Heidegger's claim in *FCM* is that the perennial structure of human existence comes to the surface in our contemporary situation, even if it is disguised and distorted by the derivative proclamations of Spengler et al. The demand contained in the lecture course is that we learn to discern between the more superficial 'life-spirit' model that these Romantic intuitions collapse into, and a deeper version of Romanticism that possesses genuine nostalgia for the Greeks.

Though the comparative-anatomical observations from philosophical anthropology seem a far cry from Heidegger's thought, its Romantic motivations and the conclusions that it draws are intriguingly close to the account of the human and its relation to *physis*

[35] Mulhall, S. (2005) *Philosophical Myths of the Fall* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press p.68

that Heidegger wishes to defend. Due to its retarded instincts and subsequent openness, the human organism is described in philosophical anthropology as ineluctably and necessarily tied to the extremity of its existence. The human world is not made up of a range of entities that manifest themselves in predictable ways; it is a dynamic process rather than a fixed domain. Like Heidegger, Gehlen describes the human as a temporal being that exists in constant anticipation of its future, a 'planning being' that must apprehend the threats of its environment, and mould its world in order to render it accommodating.[36] Gehlen claims that of necessity, the human being 'whom "even future hunger makes hungry"' must anticipate and actively orient itself towards its future possibilities for the sake of survival. It must cope with the flux and abundance of the world with a stream of action, reflection and 'suspenseful alertness.'[37] The human, as Ortega says, is 'permanently awake,' and any state of rest that it encounters must be carefully choreographed and imposed upon this fundamental wakefulness. This philosophical-anthropological idea ties in with Heidegger's claim that the human has broken down and diluted any sense of its 'essence' throughout history by constructing worldviews and masterful scientific schemas that can remove the painful contingency and indeterminacy of its life, replacing it with soporific, 'non-binding' but ameliorative epics concerning its 'condition.'[38] Taken in its entirety, *FCM* is an attempt to facilitate philosophising, which, Heidegger tells us, is the only activity that cuts through the comfortable narratives that these disciplines propagate, and impels us to courageously take ownership of our 'permanent wakefulness.'

[36] Gehlen, A. *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* p.330
[37] Ibid. p.43
[38] Heidegger, M. *FCM* §18c) p.75

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