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‘Rational Animal’ in Heidegger and Aquinas

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Abstract: Martin Heidegger rejects the traditional definition of the human being as the “rational animal” in part because he thinks it fits us into a genus that obscures our difference in kind. Thomas Aquinas shares with Heidegger the concern about the human difference, and yet he appropriates the definition, “rational animal” by conceiving animality in terms of the specifically human power of understanding being. Humans are not just distinct in their openness to being, but, thanks to that openness, they are distinct in their animality, a distinction that changes the very significance of animality itself. Heidegger also thinks the traditional definition closes us to the experience of our essence, but again Aquinas has resources for bringing out the experiential character of rational animality. Aquinas’ inclusion of animation has significance for what Heidegger calls fundamental ontology; by virtue of the human animate body, particular beings can be pointed out and designated as such.

“In the middle ages and in Greek philosophy, the whole man was still seen; the apprehension of inner psychic life, what we now so readily call consciousness, was enacted in a natural experience which was not regarded as an inner perception and so set off from an outer one.”

—Martin Heidegger¹

Martin Heidegger rejects the traditional definition of the human being as the rational animal. He thinks it fits us into a genus that obscures our difference in kind. More pointedly, he thinks that obscuring openness to being as distinctively human closes us to the difference between entities and their being. Hence the failure to understand the human is also and more importantly a failure to understand being. Some thinkers have criticized Heidegger’s rejection of the traditional definition. Hans Jonas thinks the rejection makes the human a stranger in the

¹ *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, GA 20, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979); *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 15-16/15. Translation modified. I will cite Heidegger by providing German followed by English pagination: G/E.

cosmos, and Alasdair MacIntyre thinks the rejection leaves virtue without a home in human nature.² Elsewhere I have defended Heidegger's belief that humans do in fact differ in kind from animals.³ One puzzle, given this difference in kind, is how to construe the undeniable kinship of the human and the animal. And it is here that I think that Heidegger's rejection of the traditional definition of the human as the rational animal becomes problematical. For though we differ in kind from other animals, we remain yet an animal, and our animality is not foreign to our openness to being. In this paper, I aim to solve the theoretical problems that led Heidegger to this position and to show how their solution proves fruitful for Heidegger's question concerning the meaning of being.

Thomas Aquinas shares many of Heidegger's concerns regarding human uniqueness and yet makes his own the traditional definition of the human being as the rational animal. He does this by reconfiguring animality in view of the specifically human power of understanding being. At the same time, Aquinas does not make explicit the role of the animate body in making metaphysics possible; he does not develop the problematic that Heidegger calls "fundamental ontology." He does not lay bare the condition for the possibility of ontology in terms of the openness of the human and the temporality or truth of being. He also does not adequately consider the methodological difficulties involved in targeting the person as such, an issue that Heidegger engages more penetratingly. The encounter with Heidegger brings out the latent riches of Aquinas's approach to human nature for a task, fundamental ontology, not explicitly undertaken by Aquinas.

² Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 225-226. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 43-51.

³ "Heidegger and the Human Difference," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1 (2015): 175-193.

My project is to remedy the shortcomings of both Heidegger and Aquinas by bringing them into a constructive dialogue concerning the nature of the human being and its place in fundamental ontology. While saving the definition may have wider application, such as situating ethics within a cosmic setting, I think saving animality is crucial for Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. If animality is included in the unified openness to being that is the human, then animation plays a constitutive role in our understanding of being. Thanks to our animate bodies, we can point things out in their radical particularity as *this* something.

The paper has four parts. In the first, I lay out Heidegger's assorted reasons for finding the traditional definition problematical. In the second, I introduce Aquinas's strategies for addressing at least some of the worries Heidegger has. Then, in the third, I get to the heart of the issue by examining Heidegger's phenomenological rather than metaphysical approach to being human, an approach that finds a perhaps unlikely ally in some of Aquinas's own remarks on the life lived by the embodied human intellectual soul. Finally, I argue that Aquinas's inclusion of animation and Heidegger's exclusion of animation affect the project of fundamental ontology: for Aquinas, our animate bodies have significance in allowing us to target the particularity of what is; for Heidegger, lacking such an emphasis, that particularity proves to be elusive. I argue that the difference between Heidegger and Aquinas concerning the status of the definition, "rational animal," is not merely semantic; it rather expresses something essential for the experience of what we are and of what is.

I

Heidegger's Case against "Rational Animal." Heidegger has six or so worries concerning the definition rational animal. (1) The first concerns the inadequacy of a definition

for arriving at the way of being characteristic of the human being. Specifically, he thinks that a definition is by nature restricted to “outward appearance” (*Aussehen*). In 1925, he writes, “We place ourselves in principle outside of this experiential and interrogative horizon outlined by the definition of the most customary name for this entity, man: *homo animal rationale*. What is to be determined is not an outward appearance of this entity but from the outset and throughout solely *its way to be*, not the what of that of which it is composed but *the how of its being and the characters of this how*.⁴ Earlier in the same course, however, Heidegger gave a more generous reading of the traditional approach to the human being: “In the middle ages and in Greek philosophy, the whole man was still seen; inner psychic life, what we now so readily call consciousness, was apprehended in a natural experience which was not regarded as an inner perception and so set off from an outer one.”⁵ His assessment is therefore ambiguous: Do the ancients and medievals restrict themselves to outward appearance in defining the human or do they, in contrast to the moderns, have a sense of the whole human being? This turns out to be the central question, which I will return to below.

(2) The second problem Heidegger has with the traditional definition is that rationality is an inadequate translation of *logos*. According to his reading of philosophy, *logos* comes from the experience of the being of entities thanks to the power that was traditionally termed intellect or understanding. Though *logos* originally meant speaking, a specific kind of speaking, assertion, came to dominate reflection on *logos* and consequently to determine the human as the animal that makes judgements and reasons from them.⁶ This objection, however, does not

⁴ *Prolegomena*, 207/154.

⁵ *Prolegomena*, 15-16/15.

⁶ *Sein und Zeit*, 18th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001); *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 165/208-209. See also *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte ‘Probleme’ der ‘Logik,’* GA 45, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984); *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected ‘Problems’ of ‘Logic,’* trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 140-141/121-122.

appear intractable, for it means only that the specific difference is not understood amply enough. It suggests that we can save the definition by either changing the formal indication of the specific difference to “understanding” or by stipulating that when we say “rational” we intend an openness to being more aptly indicated by the term “language” or “word.” As he translates it in one place, “the human being is the living entity to whom *the word* belongs.”⁷ Yes, Heidegger does excoriate the tradition of *ratio* as negligent concerning ontological openness, but he follows the tradition in thinking there is a human difference. Thus, for Heidegger the fatal flaw of the definition, “rational animal,” is not the invocation of a difference, although he is vexed concerning the traditional characterization of this difference.

(3) A more pressing set of objections to the definition “rational animal” comes from the designation of a genus, animality, to which the human is said to belong. In the first place, Heidegger thinks that, insofar as animality is approached through contemporary biology and this inquiry is conceived as a purely ontic inquiry into the push and pull of mechanical causality, there is no way to relate animality to the human openness to being. In *Being and Time* he writes, “‘Man’ is here defined as a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, and this is Interpreted to mean an *animal rationale*, something living which has reason. But the kind of Being which belongs to a ζῷον is understood in the sense of occurring and Being-present-at-hand.”⁸ But again, this is a trivial objection, for no traditional proponent of the definition regarded animality as merely a substance with properties. Rather the proponents of the traditional definition regarded the soul as the principle of animation, which also opens up the animal to an environment of action and

⁷ “Vom Wesen und Begriff der Φύσις. Aristoteles, Physik B, 1,” in *Wegmarken*, GA 9, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976); “On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, 1,” trans. Thomas Sheehan,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 278/212. Aquinas, too, regards speech as “reason’s proper work.” *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 91, a. 3, ad 3.

⁸ *Sein und Zeit*, 48/74. See also *Grundfragen der Philosophie*, 140-141/121-122.

perception. Nor is there any necessity for us to interpret animality as present-at-hand today; Evan Thompson and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone articulate a conception of animation consonant with contemporary science and nonetheless consistent with classical sensibilities.⁹ And Heidegger himself tells us, “Life is not a mere Being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein.”¹⁰

In *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger develops this suggestion in a way relevant to our question concerning the rational animal. Heidegger says that while a stone is worldless and Dasein is world-forming, an animal is poor in world. “We shall begin our comparative analysis by *starting from the middle*, that is, by asking what it means to say that *the animal is poor in world*.¹¹ Why should we begin with the middle? After all, is that not what the definition, “rational animal,” does? The middle allows us to keep the whole spectrum in view: “Thus we shall also constantly be looking to two sides at once, both toward the worldlessness of the stone and toward the world-forming of man, and from there in turn back toward the animal and its poverty in world.” Animal world-poverty functions analogous to the role of the ready-to-hand in *Being and Time*; that is, it stands in between the present-at-hand and Dasein, and its difference from the merely present-at-hand helps illuminate the world that arises properly with Dasein. For the animal, the disinhibiting ring of drives that lock the animal into its environment both anticipates and falls short of the openness to world that defines Dasein: “An animal can only behave [*sich ... benehmen*] but can never apprehend [*vernehmen*] something as something—which is not to deny that the animal sees or even perceives. Yet in a fundamental

⁹ Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement*, 2d ed. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011).

¹⁰ *Sein und Zeit*, 50/75.

¹¹ *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit*, GA 29/30, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983); *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 274/185.

sense the animal does not have perception [*Wahrnehmung*].”¹² The items to which the animal relates in its behavior (he gives the example of a lizard on a stone) are beings only for Dasein, not for the animals themselves: “From the perspective of the animal we should never take these other things as beings, though for us it is only possible to approach such things by way of naming through language.”¹³ The animal does not have access to itself or to its items of interest as beings, but they themselves and their items of interest can show up for us, as Dasein, in no other way than as beings. Hence, world in some way includes animal and environment while animal and environment does not include world. What we can take from this text, for our question, is twofold: Heidegger does indeed think Dasein can transpose itself into the life of animals, and Dasein can do so because in some sense world includes the environment of animals, including it in such a way that its meaning becomes transfigured by the inclusion. To regard Dasein as in some sense an animal would not mean that Dasein is to be assimilated to the present-at-hand. Therefore, this objection to the traditional definition is insubstantial.

(4) A more significant objection concerns the idea of including the human within a genus at all. The problem with doing so, Heidegger thinks, is that what is specifically human appears to be layered atop something that is generically living. In *Being and Time*, he writes:

Life, in its own right, is a kind of Being; but essentially it is accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by way of a privative Interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there can be anything like mere-aliveness [*Nur-noch-leben*]. Life is not a mere Being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein. In turn, Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by regarding it as life (in an ontologically indefinite manner) plus something else.¹⁴

Despite this suggestion that designating a genus undermines the unity of Dasein, the passage does open the possibility of achieving a unified conception of Dasein as that living entity open to

¹² *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 376/259.

¹³ *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 376/259.

¹⁴ *Sein und Zeit*, 50/75.

being, provided that life is ontologically clarified, that openness to being is seen as somehow seamlessly integrated with this ontologically clarified life, and that the unified ontologically open living entity called Dasein could be ontologically investigated as such. For the question arises, how can life be accessible in Dasein unless Dasein is in some sense alive?

Despite expressing an unambiguous aversion to defining Dasein, Heidegger cannot escape the necessity of characterizing the human in terms of genus and specific difference: “Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontologically.”¹⁵ In the “genus” of entities, we are the only ones that are open to being. Openness to being, then, can count as our specific difference. The genus entity seems even more dangerous than the genus animal, for an entity, as opposed to an animal, could very well be something present-at-hand; nonetheless, Heidegger proposes it all the same, and he does so all the while maintaining that Dasein has a consistent tendency to misunderstand itself in terms of what it is not, present-at-hand entities.

Heidegger later comes to think the definition is even more dangerous, and this for two reasons. (5) It does not clearly confront the metaphysical tradition that regards world-openness as the quality of *an entity* instead of something that happens to and through an entity, the happening of which is not itself entitative: “History of *this* question concerning entities is the history of metaphysics, history of the thinking that thinks being as the being of an entity *from out of and unto an entity*.”¹⁶ (6) Heidegger comes to emphasize more and more the changing complexion of our relatedness to being instead of the ahistorical treatment of relation characteristic of metaphysics. But despite these worries about entitativity and history, the

¹⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 12/32.

¹⁶ *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, GA 65, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989); *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 425/300.

later Heidegger simply cannot avoid presenting the uniqueness of our historical relatedness in terms of a genus-species definition involving an entity:

In the history of beyng, humans in their essence are addressed for the sake of a reply to this claim in the mode of the truth of beyng.

This distinctiveness of the human being, to be the historical entity that alone encounters entities out of the preservation (care for the clearing) of beyng in the consigning, without becoming an object of representation, nevertheless excludes every anthropomorphism. Nor can this distinctiveness—the nobility of the indigence of steadfastness in Da-seyn—ever be understood in terms of metaphysics.¹⁷

Among entities, humans alone are historical due to their dynamic relatedness to the being of entities. If Heidegger does not think that regarding Dasein as generically an entity is inherently dangerous, why should he think that regarding Dasein as generically an animal is inherently dangerous? Animals are entities, after all, and, unlike entities in general, animals are quite obviously not present-at-hand things in the world. Heidegger might rightly worry concerning the ultimate adequacy of definition in terms of genus and species; nonetheless it is unavoidable in indicating the unique calling of being human.

In sum, Heidegger has a bundle of worries about the definition rational animal, some trivial and others substantial: first, he is concerned that the definition may only target the “outward look” of the human; second, the term, “rational,” is a dim shadow of our authentic relatedness to being; third, animality is somehow supposed to be regarded wrongly as present-at-hand; fourth, any genus-species approach appears to layer a difference atop generic sameness; fifth, the definition, as an operation of metaphysics, represents openness to being as a function of an entity; sixth, the definition, as an operation of metaphysics, fails to heed the changing relatedness of the human and being through history. Of these given worries, some I have suggested are more problematical than others. Heidegger acknowledges that ancient and

¹⁷ *Das Ereignis*, GA 71, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009); *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 191/163, trans. modified.

medieval thought experienced the whole person, inner and outer. While rationality may not be the most apt expression of our difference, there is no objection to regarding that difference in terms of understanding being. Heidegger acknowledges that living beings are not present-at-hand, and he thinks that life (and presumably animality) is accessible through Dasein, suggesting that Dasein has an intrinsic connection to life and animality. The more serious objections to the definition concern the set of issues having to do with definition itself and the designation of a genus and species. Does a genus-species approach require thinking of the human being as something specific layered atop something generic? If so, Heidegger should avoid his formulations, early and late, that suggest that humans are distinctive in relation to all other entities thanks to their historical care for being. Heidegger has good reason to define the human again and again, for one cannot introduce a distinction without the backdrop of an identity; one cannot articulate difference without a corresponding sameness. Can we address the remaining worries? Is there a way to construe the relation of genus and species that will not destroy the unity of the phenomenon? Does a metaphysical approach to the rational animal represent being as a function of entities? Does it fail to mind the historical relatedness of humans and being?

II

Aquinas' Way to Save "Rational Animal." For the medieval mind, "animality" enjoys a wider semantic field than it does for Heidegger. For instance, one definition that Augustine discusses defines the human as the mortal, rational animal. The genus is living beings; humans are differentiated from beasts through reason and from divine beings through mortality.¹⁸ Aquinas likewise sees the human on the verge of two genera: of animal and of created intelligences. He thinks the inclusion of the human person in the genus animality transfigures

¹⁸ *de ordine* 2.31; *Civitate dei* 9.13, *De Trinitate* 15.11.

the meaning of animality. The human does not add rationality to animality from the outside, as it were, so that the human being is animal plus something specifically different. Rather, animality can only serve as the genus for human beings insofar as the possibility of rationality is already included within it. Thus, for Aquinas, regarding the human as the rational animal does not lower the human to the animal; it elevates the animal by recognizing the human as a genuine possibility of being an animal.

In *On Being and Essence* Aquinas writes that the genus *animalia* includes everything essential to every species to be found within it. *Animalia* “signifies a thing whose form can be the source of sensation and movement, no matter what that form may be, whether it be only a sensitive soul or a soul that is both sensitive and rational.”¹⁹ Indeed, he maintains that if animality did not include rationality, it could not be applied to the human being: “...whatever is in the species is also in the genus but in an undetermined way. If indeed ‘animal’ were not wholly what ‘man’ is, but only a part of him, ‘animal’ could not be predicated of ‘man’, since no integral part may be predicated of its whole.”²⁰ Hence, the relation of genus to specific difference, animality to rationality, is not a distinction between two composite parts; rather it is a relation between two different ways of articulating the whole: “A genus is not matter, but it is taken from matter as designating the whole; and a difference is not form, but it is taken from form as designating the whole. That is why we say that man is a rational animal, and not that he is composed of animal and rational, as we say that he is composed of soul and body.”²¹

In *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas emphasizes that the genus animality does not compromise human uniqueness, because it anticipates the essential difference between the non-rational and the rational:

¹⁹ *On Being and Essence*, 2d ed., trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: PIMS, 1968), chp. 2, n. 7.

²⁰ *On Being and Essence*, c. 2, n. 5.

²¹ *On Being and Essence*, c. 2, n. 9.

What is more, when things come together by something common to them, they must, if they are to be distinguished, be distinguished by differences which belong *per se* and not accidentally to that common thing. Thus, man and horse meet in *animal*, and are distinguished from one another not by black and white, which are related accidentally to animal, but by rational and irrational, which are *per se* pertinent to animal. This is because animal is what has soul [*animam*], and this must be distinguished by having this or that kind of soul—say, rational or irrational.²²

Having understood animality to include a radical *per se* difference, Aquinas can define the human as rational animal without sacrificing the radicality of its openness to being. A principle Aquinas invokes regarding the marvelousness of the Incarnation is applicable here: “that which is greatest in any genus seems to be the cause of the others.”²³ The human being, which is the greatest in the genus of animality, is in some sense that toward which all other animals are ordered as to their fulfillment. In comparison to the surplus of the rational soul by which it exceeds the sensitive soul, the latter appears imperfect.²⁴ Thus, for Aquinas we should understand animality in terms of being human rather than understand being human in terms of animality.

In addition to widening animality to include rationality, Aquinas deploys a second strategy later in *On Being and Essence*. He places the human within a second genus, that of created spirits: “The human soul … holds the lowest place among intellectual substances.”²⁵ Like angels, the human is an intellective being with its own *per se* act of being. Unlike angels, the human’s act of being is communicated to an essence that includes animality. Hence, the human is not only the rational animal; the human is the animate intellect. In *Summa Contra*

²² *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book IV: *Salvation*, trans. Charles O’Neil (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1957), c. 24, n. 9.

²³ “For nothing can be thought of which is more marvelous than this divine accomplishment: that the true God, the Son of God, should become true man. And because among them all it is most marvelous, it follows that toward faith in this particular marvel all other miracles are ordered, since ‘that which is greatest in any genus seems to be the cause of the others.’” (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 27, n. 1).

²⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 3, ad 4.

²⁵ *On Being and Essence*, c. 4, n. 10.

Gentiles, Aquinas sees the human being unite two genera in the unity of its one substance: intellective substance and bodily substance.

We have, therefore, to consider the existence of something supreme in the genus of bodies, namely, the human body harmoniously tempered, which is in contact with the lowest of the higher genus, namely, the human soul, which holds the lowest rank in the genus of intellectual substances, as can be seen from its mode of understanding; so that the intellectual soul is said to be on the horizon and confines of things corporeal and incorporeal, in that it is an incorporeal substance and yet the form of a body. Nor is a thing composed of an intellectual substance and corporeal matter less one than a thing made up of the form of fire and its matter, but perhaps it is more one; because the greater the mastery of form over matter, the greater is the unity of that which is made from it and matter.²⁶

Aquinas regards this overlapping of two genera to be typical of what he calls “the marvelous connection of things”: “For it is always found that the lowest in the higher genus touches the highest of the lower species. Some of the lowest members of the animal kingdom, for instance, enjoy a form of life scarcely superior to that of plants; oysters, which are motionless, have only the sense of touch and are fixed to the earth like plants.”²⁷ Aquinas does refrain from defining the human as animate intellect on experiential grounds; we are the only species of intellects that we can perceive; we cannot know the species of angels; and one cannot define a species in terms of a genus when no other species are known.²⁸ Despite this limitation, simultaneously including humans in a higher genus in principle resists the tendency to reduce the human to a “mere” animal.

In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas locates the human within a cosmic scale of different modes of emanation (*emanationis modus*); in the unity of the human essence, the animal and the personal are brought together. While the inanimate interacts only via outer

²⁶ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, c. 68, n. 6.

²⁷ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, c. 68, n. 6.

²⁸ On the advantages and disadvantages of defining the human as incarnate spirit, see James Lehrberger, O.Cist., “The Anthropology of Aquinas’s *De Ente et Essentia*,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 51 (1998): 829-847, esp. 843-844.

powers, living beings act by acting on themselves, and this kind of agency involves varying degrees of inwardness: “living things are those which move themselves to action [*viventia sunt quae se ipsa movent ad agendum*].”²⁹ In plants, accordingly, there is some share of inwardness; in growing, they proceed from within but bring about something entirely external. With animals this degree of inwardness intensifies; in sensing, they proceed from within and bring something external, the perceptual object, to inward awareness; nonetheless, the sense power cannot know itself, so the movement from within to without does not entirely return within. It is otherwise for human beings. In knowing, the human goes beyond itself by means of sensing and then returns to itself through knowing to achieve self-knowledge. Unlike divine or angelic knowledge, which knows without an outward movement, human self-knowledge happens thanks to knowing something sensible: “For the human intellect, although it can know itself, does indeed take the first beginning of its knowledge from without, because it cannot understand without a phantasm.”³⁰ Aquinas can thus situate human transcendence within a cosmic scale that highlights the uniqueness of our characteristic movement rather than compromises it.

Aquinas, then, has two related strategies for saving the definition “rational animal.” First, he sees the human, the highest in the genus of animal, as that which reveals the complete meaning of the genus. Second, he regards the human, the highest in the genus of animal, as being at the same time the lowest in the genus of created intelligences. Heidegger does not seem to take to either of Aquinas’s strategies. In the “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” he remarks, “In principle we are still thinking of *homo animalis* — even when *anima* [soul] is posited as *animus*

²⁹ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11, n. 3.

³⁰ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11, n. 5.

sive mens [spirit or mind], and this in turn is later posited as subject, person, or spirit.”³¹ This approach tells us something correct about the human being but it remains within the parameters of the metaphysical question concerning what something is and remains outside the experience in which the human person comes into his or her own: “Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that the human being essentially occurs in his essence only where he is claimed by being.”³² The same critique applies, it seems, also to the approach that would locate the human person within a genus that includes higher beings: “Are we really on the right track toward the essence of the human being as long as we set him off as one living creature among others in contrast to plants, beasts, and God?”³³ Thus, it seems that Aquinas’s two strategies, while perhaps undercutting some of the force of Heidegger’s objections, still miss what is essential.

III

Experiencing the Human Essence. Heidegger introduces the term Dasein in *Being and Time* by calling to mind two inseparable features of that entity for whom being is an issue: Dasein, unlike other sorts of things, is characterized by freedom and unrealized possibilities of acting and experiencing, and Dasein, unlike other sorts of things, exists for its own sake. Aquinas, too, is aware that the singularity of a human being, who has a mastery of his or her own actions, is significantly different from the singularity of other sorts of beings.³⁴ How does the unique human essence show up in experience? On his quest to understand the human from out

³¹ “Brief über den *Humanismus*,” in *Wegmarken*, GA 9, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976); “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 323/246.

³² “Brief über den *Humanismus*,” 323/247. This claim echoes the opening of the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* in which he writes, “It is no longer a case of talking ‘about’ something and representing something objective, but rather of being owned over into enowning. This amounts to an essential transformation of the human from ‘rational animal’ (*animal rationale*) to Da-sein.” *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 1/3.

³³ “Brief über den *Humanismus*,” 323/247.

³⁴ See *Summa Theologiae*, I, 29, a. 4, and I-II, prologue.

of the experience of being, Heidegger develops a new philosophical method called “formal indication.”³⁵ Instead of the classical logic of definition in terms of genus and species, Heidegger proposes a logic of experiential indexicals, aimed to signify and motivate a shift in experiential register, from what is experienced, through how it is experienced, to the very modality of self at work in the experiencing. That is, he follows Husserl in distinguishing the act and the object of intentionality, but he goes further in envisioning a dual mode to the act: it can be enacted inauthentically or authentically. In the inauthentic register, the focus is on the object intended. In the authentic register, the focus retreats to the widest horizon, to set the intentional relation within the ultimate context in which it takes place. In the authentic register, there is not simply an experience of an item in the world; there is an experience of having an experience of an item in the world. Central, then, to Heidegger’s conception of phenomenology is the character of the enactment (*Vollzug*):

Each experience—as experiencing, and what is experienced—can “be taken in the phenomenon,” that is to say, one can ask:

1. After the original “*what*,” that is experienced therein (*content*).
2. After the original “*how*,” in which it is experienced (*relation*).
3. After the original “*how*,” in which the relational meaning is *enacted* (*enactment*).

But these three directions of sense (content-, relational-, enactment-sense) do not simply coexist. “Phenomenon” is the totality of sense in these three directions. “Phenomenology” is explication of this totality of sense; it gives the “λόγος” of the phenomenon, “λόγος” in the sense of “*verbum internum*” (not in the sense of logicalization).³⁶

On the basis of this more comprehensive modality of experience, one can philosophize and bring to articulation the various transcendental structures that are at work in that experience (facticity,

³⁵ See Steven Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 137-144, and Daniel Dahlstrom, “Heidegger’s Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indications,” *Review of Metaphysics* 47 (1994): 775-95.

³⁶ *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, GA 60, ed. Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995); *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 63/43.

falleness, and the like). The mention of the Latin term, *verbum internum*, in this context is provocative, and we will return to it below; in *Being and Time*, Heidegger will appropriate the idea of the internal word in terms of the call of conscience.³⁷ The later Heidegger will suppress the name “formal indication” and come to emphasize the historicity of authentic experience, but the basic approach persists.³⁸ Heidegger finds every genus-species approach to the human problematical, because it remains closed to the formally indicative logic that shows us what is really essential to the human. We are not merely an entity within a cosmic scheme of entities; we are an entity open to the being of all entities and, in order to think about this openness, we need to turn from the entities themselves to the question of their being experienced. Heidegger introduces formal indication to articulate the intrinsic intelligibility of our way of being; he regards all generalization in terms of genus and species to be a way of conceiving us in terms of what we are not; in this way, generalization misses what is essential to being human.

Now, it might seem that Aquinas would not be sympathetic to formal indication, because he belongs to the tradition it is deployed to overcome. However, in *De Veritate*, we find Aquinas doing something that seems quite similar to Heidegger’s formal indication. Aquinas articulates the shift required for thinking about the condition for the possibility of truth; we have to know the active principle and its relatedness to that which is:

Truth follows the operation of the intellect inasmuch as it belongs to the intellect to judge about a thing as it is. And truth is known by the intellect in view of the fact that the intellect reflects upon its own act—not merely as knowing its own act, but as knowing the proportion of its act to the thing. Now, this proportion cannot be known without knowing the nature of the act; and the nature of the act cannot be known without knowing the nature of the active principle, that is, the intellect itself, to whose nature it belongs to

³⁷ *Sein und Zeit*, sections 54-60. On the importance of the medieval doctrine of the internal word for Heidegger’s student, Hans-Georg Gadamer, see John Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), and Mirela Oliva, *Das innere Verbum in Gadamers Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

³⁸ See Lawrence Hatab, “The Point of Language in Heidegger’s Thinking: A Call for the Revival of Formal Indication,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 6 (2016): 1-22.

be conformed to things. Consequently, it is because the intellect reflects upon itself [*supra seipsum reflectitur*] that it knows truth.³⁹

Shifting from what is experienced to the act that experiences and thinking about this act as the expression of an active principle corresponds, in outline form, with Heidegger's logic of formal indication. In commenting on this passage, Heidegger focuses on Aquinas' sense of self-reflection, which he uncharitably identifies with the Cartesian *cogito me cogitare*; in point of fact, Aquinas is insisting, contrary to a kind of angelic or Cartesian anthropology, that self-knowledge in the human being begins by first encountering things outside us through sense perception; only on this basis can we return to ourselves and reflect on our agency in making sense of things.⁴⁰ Moreover, some self-awareness is to be found resident in the experience itself; reflection does not construct but elucidate the sense of self already present in the intentional experience.⁴¹ Still, Heidegger is likely right in his general judgment that while Aquinas does have various accounts of the relatedness of the intellect to being he does not quite explain the modalization of experience necessary to bring this abstract relatedness to concrete, intuitive givenness.⁴² In that way, Aquinas could benefit from Heidegger's development of phenomenological logic, which brings to intuitive givenness the transcendental relatedness of mind to world that Aquinas rightly considers.

No doubt there are limits to definitions when we seek self-understanding and that the phenomenological task is to come into an experience of that which is essential, to encounter our essentiality. However, is Heidegger correct that the definition, "rational animal," distracts us from what is essential? It would be such a distraction only if animality were unrelated to the

³⁹ *Truth*, vol. 1, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), q. 1, a. 9.

⁴⁰ *Geschichte der Philosophie von Thomas von Aquin bis Kant*, GA 23, ed. Helmuth Vetter (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 81.

⁴¹ On the interplay of nascent self-awareness and the act of reflection, see Therese Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴² *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 63.

experience of being claimed by being. But this seems highly questionable. Isn't animation central to our indexicality, central to our role in providing a place for things to manifest themselves in their intelligibility? What if Heidegger were right in his 1925 judgment, quoted at the outset?

In the middle ages and in Greek philosophy, the whole man was still seen; the apprehension of inner psychic life, what we now so readily call consciousness, was enacted [*vollzogen*] in a natural experience which was not regarded as an inner perception and so set off from an outer one.⁴³

Did the medieval and Greek apprehension happen upon an enactment of experience that had the virtue of failing to separate off the inner from the outer? Did this enactment express itself in the definition rational animal? And, if so, what value might this original unity have for fundamental ontology?

One way to proceed is to ask how the genus-specific definition, “rational animal,” can interface with the self-knowledge of each person as an individual knower, as an agent of experience. Heidegger’s discussion of self-knowledge involves transparency concerning human existence as being-alongside the world and being-with others, a transparency brought about *inwardly* in terms of the call of conscience.⁴⁴ He does not speak of the way this self-knowledge shows up *outwardly*; the animate body is curiously absent from his account.⁴⁵ Aquinas has occasion to discuss self-knowledge as a rational animal while philosophizing in light of Trinitarian theology. Recall that Heidegger’s formal indication sought a meaning to the

⁴³ *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, 15-16/15. Translation modified.

⁴⁴ *Sein und Zeit*, 146/186-7.

⁴⁵ Heidegger discusses the body obliquely in terms of bringing something close and the directionality of right and left, while acknowledging that a phenomenology of the human “bodily nature” needs to be developed. *Sein und Zeit*, 108/143. He will come to remedy this neglect in some of his later writings. For example, in dialogue with psychologists, he maintains that being-in-the-world is bound up with our animate bodies: “Within philosophy we must not limit the word ‘gesture’ merely to ‘expression.’ Instead, we must characterize all comportment of the human being as *being-in-the-world*, determined by the bodying forth of the body. Each movement of my body as a ‘gesture’ … is always already in a certain region which is open through the thing to which I am in a relationship, for instance, when I take something into my hand.” *Zollikon Seminars*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Northwestern University Press, 2001), 90-91.

phenomena “in the sense of ‘*verbum internum*’ (not in the sense of logicalization).”⁴⁶ Here Aquinas points to the interior word as the means for achieving self-understanding:

When our intellect understands itself, the being of the intellect is one being, and that of its act of understanding another, for the substance of the intellect was in potency to understanding before it actually understood. Consequently, the being of the intention understood is one being and that of the intellect itself is another being, since the being of the intention understood is the very being understood. Necessarily, then, in a man understanding himself, the word interiorly conceived [*verbum interius conceptum*] is not a true man having the natural being [*esse*] of man, but is only *man understood*, a kind of likeness, as it were, of the true man which the intellect grasps [*quasi quaedam similitudo hominis veri ab intellectu apprehensa*].⁴⁷

Note that Aquinas takes pains to say that this appearance of the self to the self is not really a likeness understood as a copy; instead it is a genuine presentation of what exists, the existing man, without being a kind of duplication. Aquinas points out in the next paragraph that “for *this man* is neither his humanity nor his act of being.”⁴⁸ How does the interior word present the unity of *this man*? Does this self-understanding of understanding draw life from rational animality? Despite his insistence on sense perception for self-knowledge, does Aquinas here anticipate the Cartesian principle of self-reflection after all? Is Heidegger correct in his judgment that experience remains foreign to the definition, rational animal?

Against the Averroists, Aquinas affirms, “This man [*hic homo*] understands.”⁴⁹ Each person has his own act of understanding. Only if the intellectual soul animates *this body* is it

⁴⁶ *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 63/43.

⁴⁷ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11, n. 11.

⁴⁸ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11, n. 12.

⁴⁹ *Commentary on Aristotle's 'De Anima'*, trans. Kenelm Foster, O.P. and Sylvester Humphries, O.P. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), III, lecture 7, n. 690. On the role of the interior word for self-understanding, see Bernard Lonergan's helpful study, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. David B. Burrell, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 75-88. In the context of my inquiry, I have two reservations with his account: he refers to Aquinas's method as one of “introspection,” and he accordingly does not follow Aquinas in emphasizing the role of the body in the individuation of experience.

possible to say that this man understands.⁵⁰ And, as animated bodies, we find ourselves in the midst of other animated bodies:

When we see that a man is moved and performs other works, we perceive that there is present in him some cause of these operations which is not present in other things, and we call this cause the soul; yet we do not know at that point what the soul is, whether it is a body, or how it produces these operations which have been mentioned.⁵¹

The interior word grasps the self as an embodied rational animal that shows up in the world thanks to bodily movement and action. The animate body proves to be the localized center for the manifestation of the person:

For “person” in general signifies the individual substance of a rational nature. The individual in itself is undivided, but is distinct from others. Therefore “person” in any nature signifies what is distinct in that nature: thus in human nature it signifies *this* flesh, *these* bones, and *this* soul, which are the individuating principles of a man, and which, though not belonging to “person” in general, nevertheless do belong to the meaning of a particular human person.⁵²

In articulating the metaphysics of human individuality, Aquinas points to the particular matter that makes up the person. At the same time, he points to the experience of that incarnate spirit: he or she shows up in the domain of experience so we can point to *this* person as other than *that* person. Aquinas’s interior word, then, contains an implicit reference to the experience of rational embodiment that is distinct from all others. Self-knowledge comes from the domain of interpersonal animation. When we point to a rational animal, we point to a pointer. We point to one who not only perceives the world but who understands the logic of points of view and can direct the views of others. We point to human persons, the pointers in the world.

⁵⁰ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 1.

⁵¹ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, c. 38, n. 1. Aquinas’ account of intersubjectivity receives illumination in the work of Karol Wojtyła, who highlights two moments of intersubjective awareness: an understanding of the human essence and an understanding of *this* person revealed through embodied acts of the will. See “Participation or Alienation?” In *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 197-207.

⁵² *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948), I, 29, a. 4. My emphasis.

Though Heidegger does talk about Dasein without *this flesh, these bones, and this animating principle*, the question arises whether this neglect does not handicap his efforts to establish fundamental ontology. In other words, is anything lost due to his one-sided focus on the inside of experience in the call of conscience and his neglect of the outwardness of experience in the thisness of interpersonal encounter? Can Dasein point to Dasein pointing? Moreover, does Aquinas grasp the ontological implications of his animate approach to being human? Can the debate concerning animation and experiencing the human essence illumine the task of fundamental ontology?

IV

Rational Animal and Fundamental Ontology. In 1922, Heidegger drafted the introduction to a book on Aristotle that never came to be. In that text he mentions briefly the Aristotelian approach to animality as providing a concrete approach to intentionality and intelligibility. He planned to treat “human life and its movement,” worked out in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, within a wider context of natural movement:

We first provide an interpretation of *De anima* with respect to its ontological and logical structure, and indeed this itself is carried out on the broader basis of an explication of the domain of the being of *life* as a particular kind of movement (i.e., on the basis of an interpretation of *De motu animalium*). What is shown here is how “intentionality” comes into view for Aristotle and indeed as “objective,” i.e., as a how of the movement of life that is somehow “noetically” illuminated when it goes about its dealings. Beings in their basic aspect of being-moved, i.e., their “being out for” and “going toward,” constitute the forehaving and condition that makes it possible for us to bring intentionality into relief in accord with how it becomes explicit in Aristotle and for its part makes visible the basic characteristic of λόγος.⁵³

⁵³ “Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation), ed. HansUlrich Lessing, *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 6 (1989); “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation (1922),” trans. John van Buren, in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to ‘Being and Time’ and Beyond*, ed. van Buren (Albany: SUNY, 2002), 267-8/143-144.

According to this view, Aristotle provides the way to understand intentionality from the outside through the movement of animals, and this movement helps explicate the specifically human sense of *λόγος*. Rather than developing this insight, Heidegger in *Being and Time* runs his analysis of Dasein independent of the question of animate movement. Hence he treats of time (and space) as structures of experience that can be grasped through authentic existence; he passes over the movement that puts time and space into play thanks to our bodily way of being. Heidegger's rejection of "rational animality" and his rejection of animate movement as clue to the human being go hand in hand. What would have been the advantage had Heidegger approached fundamental ontology through interpersonal animate movement?

In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl accomplished two things of lasting significance for Heidegger's project. First, he refuted psychologism, the attempt to handle truth in terms of empirical principles. As early as 1912, Heidegger claims that Husserl's investigations "have truly broken the psychological spell": "While Frege overcame psychologism in principle, Husserl in his *Prolegomena to a Pure Logic* has systematically and comprehensively confronted the essence, relativistic consequences, and theoretical worthlessness of psychologism."⁵⁴ Second, Husserl developed the principles to account for the way truth shows up in experience in terms of the play of emptily intending and then bodily perceiving one and the same object. The experience of the identity of thought and perceptual presence is the experience of self-showing or truth. The only way to square the refutation of psychologism and the phenomenology of truth is to make the transcendental turn. The analytic of *Being and Time* aims to uncover the *a priori* condition for the possibility of experience and thereby to develop Husserl's phenomenological

⁵⁴ "Neuere Forschungen über Logik," in *Frühe Schriften (1912-1916)*, GA 1, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978); "Recent Research in Logic," in *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 19/33 and 20/33.

project: “To disclose the *a priori* is not to make an ‘*a-prioristic*’ construction. Edmund Husserl has not only enabled us to understand once more the meaning of any genuine philosophical empiricism; he has also given us the necessary tools. ‘*A-priorism*’ is the method of every scientific philosophy which understands itself.”⁵⁵ Heidegger’s discussion of truth as disclosedness in *Being and Time* amounts to a development of this transcendental domain.⁵⁶ Husserl’s analysis of perception, that is, of intending something in the flesh, makes a tacit reference to our embodied selves and our own vantage point. For only that which is near us, in view thanks to our viewpoint, can be present in the flesh. Our own bodies, not qua physical things, but qua centers or origins of experiential exploration, have crucial roles to play in making sense of the experience of at least perceptual truths.⁵⁷ Heidegger’s notion of disclosedness similarly suggests a kind of exploratory movement without, however, explicitly relating that movement to the body which makes such movement possible.⁵⁸

Aquinas turns from the movement itself to that which shows up thanks to the movement, and he reflects on how that movement reveals something essential to what shows up in that movement, a revelation that could not happen in another way. Aquinas wants to explain the thisness of this composite substance and he does so in terms of designate matter.⁵⁹ Now, designate matter is matter we can point to, matter that is the term of our animate, bodily movement. It is not abstract but concrete. Our bodies play, then, a crucial role in allowing us to target the concreteness of things. They not only play a role in accounting for sense perception;

⁵⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 50/490.

⁵⁶ See Chad Engelland, *Heidegger’s Shadow: Kant, Husserl, and the Transcendental Turn* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 32-60.

⁵⁷ For Husserl’s distinction between body and flesh, see *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book, Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), §§35-42, pp. 151-169.

⁵⁸ On this movement, see Chad Engelland, *Ostension: Word Learning and the Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 131-170 and 193-214.

⁵⁹ See John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 351-375.

they not only play a role in individuating us to be the particular being each of us is; but they play a role in what would be Aquinas's fundamental ontology: our animate bodies, localizing us in the here and now, allow us to highlight the particularity of those beings we encounter. To introduce our bodies is to do so not only in terms of their materiality or potency to receive form but also in terms of their natural and dynamic possibilities for movement and rest. We can initiate a movement, say stretching out an arm, hand, and index finger, and bring about a rest, thereby targeting the thing in its particularity. We puzzle over the τόδε τι, the *hoc aliquid*, the *this something*.

Now, designating the particular is tricky, both because the act of pointing is necessarily ambiguous and because language only expresses universality.⁶⁰ In the case of targeting something in its particularity it seems necessary to invoke language in order to revoke it: I am not pointing to the treeness of the tree, shared in principle by many, but its particularity, its thisness. The pointing makes use of the here and now to make manifest something in its particularity not in its hereness and nowness. It is not a matter of targeting its presence but of making it present to target its identity, an identity that remains through the interplay of presence and absence, an identity that came to be and may one day cease to be thanks to a constellation of causal factors. At the same time, we do not point to the identity as excluding its intelligibility, for these are moments one to another; the particularity of a tree is distinguishable but not separable from its being a tree. To use an example from Heidegger that underscores the human difference: “The worker bee is familiar with the blossoms it frequents along with their colour and scent, but it does not know the stamens of these blossoms *as* stamens, it knows nothing about the roots of the plant and it cannot know anything about the number of stamens or leaves, for

⁶⁰ On disambiguating pointing, see Engelland, *Ostension*, 171-192.

example. As against this, the world of man is a rich one. . . .”⁶¹ The bee, closed to the intelligibility of the stamen is closed too to its particularity; rather the blossom shows up only through the determinations of its drives. By contrast, we can target the particular identity and intelligibility of things independent of our own interests. In this way, I do not think that Heidegger’s critique of the metaphysical tradition, so memorably expressed by Derrida’s phrase, “metaphysics of presence,” understands what is at issue in grasping intelligibility; though the identity and intelligibility of a thing can only be known through presence, it is known through presence as indifferent to presence and absence.⁶²

Aquinas uses thisness without thematizing the animate body’s role in being a condition for the possibility of metaphysics.⁶³ He does speak about the need of the phantasm for understanding, because the phantasm unites our understanding of nature to what actually exists. In this way, the phantasm is significant precisely because it retains the bodily pointing-something-out of experience:

Wherefore the nature of a stone or any material thing cannot be known completely and truly, except in as much as it is known as existing in the individual. Now we apprehend the individual through the senses and the imagination. And, therefore, for the intellect to understand actually its proper object, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms in order to perceive the universal nature existing in the individual.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit*, 285/193.

⁶² See “Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,” in *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976); “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 225/173, 230-231/176-177. On Heidegger’s understanding of essence, see my *Heidegger’s Shadow*, 224-227.

⁶³ What about God and the angels? Can’t they know singulars? Aquinas says yes: God, insofar as he causes to be all that is known the singular; angels, insofar as they are given to participate in God’s creative knowledge, can likewise know singulars. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 57, a. 2. Neither, however, need philosophize nor do metaphysics. Hence, our bodies are a condition for the possibility of metaphysics; they constitute the need and the means for us to philosophize with our unique grade of finite and embodied intellects.

⁶⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 84, a. 7.

One way to develop the relevance of bodily movement for Aquinas would be to turn to the derivation of the transcendentals in *De Veritate*.⁶⁵ This is the very passage which Heidegger calls our attention to in *Being and Time* in order to maintain that the analytic of Dasein does not amount to a kind of relativism; the apriori relatedness of being to the human soul can be found in Aristotle's dictum that the soul is in a way all things, a point explicitly developed by Aquinas. Heidegger writes:

Aristotle's principle, which points back to the ontological thesis of Parmenides, is one which Thomas Aquinas has taken up in a characteristic discussion. ... Thomas has to demonstrate that the *verum* is such a *transcendens*. He does this by invoking an entity which, in accordance with its very manner of being, is properly suited to "come together with" entities of any sort whatever. This distinctive entity, the *ens quod natum est convenire cum omni ente*, is the soul (*anima*). Here the priority of "Dasein" over all other entities emerges, although it has not been ontologically clarified. This priority has obviously nothing in common with a vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities.⁶⁶

Aquinas calls all being true and good in reference to the intellectual soul which is in a way all things. The question to pose to Aquinas is whether this correlation of being and the intellectual soul applies only to the intellectual soul *qua* intellectual soul or also to the intellectual soul *qua* sensitive power? For in the human though not in God or the angels, the intellectual soul exercises virtual sensitive powers.⁶⁷ Aquinas says that knowing the truth involves knowing not only the essence of what is known and the act of knowing but especially knowing the *proportion* between what is known and the act of knowing, a knowledge that comes from reflecting on the act of knowing. Intellectual substances go out of themselves to know something but the movement is completed in a return to self. Aquinas introduces this movement in order to observe that sense perception in a way begins the return to self but does not complete it: "Since sense is closer to an intellectual substance than other things are, it begins to return to its essence;

⁶⁵ *Truth*, q. 1, a. 1.

⁶⁶ *Sein und Zeit*, 14/34.

⁶⁷ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 3.

it not only knows the sensible, but it also knows that it senses. Its return, however, is not complete, since it does not know its own essence.”⁶⁸ Only the intellect can know itself in its act of knowing and know the relation of itself and the object known.

I would like to develop this point beyond what Aquinas explicitly says. Can the intellect know the proportion of our bodily, sensing, moving being to our knowledge of material beings? In *On the Soul*, Aristotle identifies three interrelated foci of meaning: the intellect, the sensitive soul, and the hand. He writes: “It follows that the soul is analogous to the hand; for as the hand is a tool of tools, so thought is the form of forms and sense the form of sensible things.”⁶⁹ Can we not expand what Aquinas says about truth’s relatedness to the knowing power and maintain that, in relation to the incarnate intellectual soul, all material being is able to be designated? That the condition for the possibility of doing metaphysics about material beings is having an intellectual soul which, thanks to animating a body, can allow us to point to things in their particularity?

Aquinas seems to move in this direction in detailing his “history of being” in the *Summa Theologiae*. There he iterates three epochs of inquiry into being, epochs defined by the limits of their horizon of questioning. In the beginning, philosophers were “grosser” in mind and therefore conceived of being in terms of bodily qualities alone.⁷⁰ But then Plato and Aristotle happened upon the specificity of bodies in terms of substantial forms that we can point out; our bodies allow us to target the particularity and substantiality of bodily being. What this horizon of questioning does not include, however, is the availability of the matter contracted by the substantial form, either in the being pointed out or, presumably, in the being that points it out. I

⁶⁸ *Truth*, q. 1, a. 9.

⁶⁹ *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, Vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3.8, 432a1-3.

⁷⁰ *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 2.

say presumably, because Aquinas is committed to the principle that knowing involves knowing the proportion of the act of understanding to that which is understood. Aquinas thinks it was necessary, then, to move into a deeper horizon of questioning that grasps being as being: “Then others there were who arose to the consideration of ‘being,’ as being, and who assigned a cause to things, not as ‘these,’ or as ‘such,’ [*haec vel talia*] but as ‘beings.’”⁷¹ Aquinas thematizes eras of metaphysical inquiry in terms of bodiliness. In doing so, he highlights the importance of pointing to what is in order to progress beyond the Presocratic inquiry. The final stage, which fulfills the original quest to comprehend being as being, marks a third way of appropriating bodiliness, not only as having qualities or particular substantiality but also as occupying a wider context of existence. Aquinas sees a historical relatedness to understanding being in terms of the animate movement of pointing.⁷²

Aquinas observes that an inanimate object might be right or left relative to the explorations of a given animal, but of course this tells us nothing about the object itself except its accidental relatedness to the animal’s surrounding world.

For there is in animals a distinction of the powers from which the relation of right and left arises, on which account such a relation truly and really exists in the animal. Hence, no matter how the animal is turned around, the relation always maintains itself in the same way, for the right part is never called the left. Inanimate things, to be sure, which lack the powers just mentioned, have no relation of this kind really existing in them, but one names them in the relation of right or of left from this: the animals in some way present themselves to the inanimate. Hence, the same column is called now right, now left, inasmuch as the animal is compared to it in a different situation.⁷²

By contrast, when we point to something in its particularity, we are not targeting something accidental to it but instead something constitutive of it. The pointing is accidental but that which the pointing targets is not. What is the difference between being right or left and this pointing?

⁷¹ For a Thomistic history of being that includes post-Thomistic thinking, see Kenneth Schmitz, *The Recovery of Wonder: The New Freedom and the Asceticism of Power* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

⁷² *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 14, n. 11.

Being right or left is incidental to what something is; while the fact of being pointed out is still incidental, being able to be pointed out is an intrinsic property of something. It makes no difference to the essence of a tree whether it is on the right or left of a hiker, nor does it make a difference to that essence whether it is pointed out or known by the hiker. But it does make a difference to that essence that it can be pointed out, that it is something that is particular and able to be so designated. Each thing corresponds with the intellect as knowable and so true, each thing corresponds with the will as appetible and so good, and each material thing corresponds with the animate body as able to be pointed out and so individual.

Heidegger realizes formally the need for a fundamental ontology that would relate the traditional categories both to the human way of being and to the place in which the human is. He also expands the categories beyond sensible substances to include categories for handy things such as tools, for scientific objects of investigation, and for the particularly human way of being. However, he neglects the kind of categorial articulation that was the focus of Aristotle and Aquinas: the being of living beings. One clue in *Being and Time* for pursuing the importance of the body for fundamental ontology is to recall that Heidegger's categorial articulation of the ready-to-hand and present-to-hand occurs relative to what Aristotle calls the “tool of tools,” namely *the human hand*. In several texts from the 1940s and 50s, Heidegger develops this significance and shows a clear recognition of the importance of the human hand for understanding being. In *What Is Called Thinking* (1951-52), he writes, “If we are to think of man not as a living being but a *human* being, we must first give attention to the fact that man is that being who has his being by pointing to what is, and that particular beings manifest themselves as such by such pointing [Zeigen].”⁷³ To be human means to be open to the

⁷³ *Was Heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1954); *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 153/148-149. Translation modified.

intelligibility of things. Even our hands take their significance from this openness: “The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs—paws, claws, or fangs—different by an abyss of essence. Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft.”⁷⁴ Specifically human acts are bound up with the handiness of the hand: “Man himself acts [*handelt*] through the hand [*Hand*]; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man. … Through the hand occur both prayer and murder, greeting and thanks, oath and signal, and also the ‘work’ of the hand, the ‘hand-work,’ and the tool.”⁷⁵ The hand expresses the fundamental disclosive activity of Dasein in relation to things and other Dasein: “The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others.”⁷⁶ Even language is spoken in the milieu of the body’s gestures.⁷⁷ “Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element.”⁷⁸ Openness to being includes the body and its animate movement.

Heidegger considers the difference between the Latin terms *anima* and *animus* only to conclude that both terms subordinate the human to the animal. However, he immediately adds a qualification that amounts to a retraction: “*Animus*, it is true, means that thinking and striving of human nature [*jenes Sinnen und Trachten des Menschenwesens*] which always is determined by, attuned to, what is [*das überall von dem her, was ist, bestimmt und das heißt bestimmt bleibt*].”⁷⁹ Things are available to us in their intelligibility thanks in part to the striving of our thoughtful

⁷⁴ 18/16.

⁷⁵ *Parmenides*, GA 54, ed. Manfred S. Frings (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1982); *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 118/80.

⁷⁶ *Was Heißt Denken?* 18-19/16.

⁷⁷ 19/16.

⁷⁸ 19/16.

⁷⁹ *Was Heißt Denken?*, 153/149. Translation modified.

animate movement. But doesn't that mean we should rethink animality to accommodate this extraordinary possibility? The human act of pointing is among the highest possibilities of animality. Dining and procreation would be two other such possibilities.⁸⁰

V

Conclusion. In the “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” Heidegger writes, “Of all the beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are in a certain way most closely akin to us [*am nächsten verwandt*], and on the other they are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss.”⁸¹ To safeguard the difference, he denies himself the vocabulary to articulate the acknowledged kinship. Humans are strangers on the earth. In making us so he renders the difference suspect, for the kindship of humans and animals is evident in our experience. Should he want to be persuasive in safeguarding the difference, he must give an account of the kinship. Aquinas’s strategy for rescuing animality provides an alternative; the abyssal difference between humans and other animals transforms the meaning of the whole genus animalia. The fundamental difference affects the sameness. For Aquinas, ours is not a foreign presence; ours is a transfiguring one, which takes up and transforms the meaning of the life led by the other animals that festoon the earth we call home.

Is the definition, “rational animal,” dangerous? Of course it is, but so is “Dasein,” “ek-sistent,” “being-in-the-world,” “shepherd of being,” and the technical vocabulary that Heidegger makes his own. Every word in which we name ourselves is prone to misunderstanding. All such

⁸⁰ See Leon Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Chad Engelland, “The Personal Significance of Sexual Reproduction,” *The Thomist* 79 (2015): 615-639

⁸¹ “Brief über den Humanismus,” 326/248.

words may obscure instead of illuminate. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that “the ultimate business of philosophy is to preserve the *force of the most elemental words* in which Dasein expresses itself, and to keep the common understanding from leveling them off to that unintelligibility which functions in turn as a source of pseudo-problems.”⁸² Surely, human animality is one of those terms. Aristotle sensibly observes, “And, of course, man is the animal with which we are all of us the most familiar.”⁸³ Why capitulate to “common understanding” when it comes to animality? Doesn’t that create what Heidegger rightly regards as a pseudo-problem?

Aquinas wrestles with the logic of definition to enable the human to transfigure the meaning of animality; he also indicates ways in which our bodies give us a grip on the particularity of the things of this world, a grip that has changed from epoch to epoch. Heidegger’s astute inquiry into the condition for the possibility of understanding being can reveal the riches of Aquinas’s thoughts about animation. Aquinas touches upon fundamental ontology in relating the embodied intellect to that which is known, but he does not grasp the contours of the problematic in the radical manner pioneered by Heidegger. Though Heidegger inquired into fundamental ontology, his neglect of animation hampers his efforts and closes him to the aspects that Aquinas’ thought allows us to perceive. Hence, both Aquinas and Heidegger benefit from the encounter: Aquinas in becoming perspicacious regarding fundamental ontology and Heidegger in becoming perspicacious regarding the significance of animation for that project.

Heidegger’s rejection of the classical term “rational animal” suggests he was unable to extricate himself completely from Descartes’s shadow by recovering a sense of life whose

⁸² *Sein und Zeit*, 220/262.

⁸³ *History of Animals*, trans. Thompson, in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. I, ed. Barnes, 1.6, 491a19.

outward display is ineluctably inward as well. Saving the definition, rational animal, allows us to reconnect Dasein to living, bodily beings, and doing so makes fundamental ontology open to the sort of phenomenon of chief interest to Aristotle and Aquinas. Even though the understanding of our bodies changes from epoch to epoch, and even though how an age and a thinker understands being shifts, the inclusion of our animate, formed bodies and their needs introduces a non-historical element into fundamental ontology. The body provides an Aristotelian rather than a Platonic universal: a dynamic, flexible intelligibility woven into the fabric of being that allows us to make sense of the world and of ourselves.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See my *Ostension*, 171-192. Shorter versions of this paper were presented at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology and in the session, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics,” at a meeting of the American Catholic Philosophical Association. I am thankful to Justin Gable, O.P., Anselm Ramelow, O.P., Molly Flynn, Jonathan J. Sanford, and Mark Spencer for their comments on those occasions. Michael Bowler, Mirela Oliva, and James Lehrberger, O.Cist., also provided invaluable assistance.

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