

being-open for the disinhibitor-and yet the very possibility of having the disinhibitor revealed as a being is withheld from this being-open-for-because of this, the possession of being open is a not-having, and indeed a not having of world, if the potentiality for revelation of beings as such does indeed belong to world!!

The Open

Not even the lark sees the open.

-Martin Heidegger

At stake in the course is the definition of the concept of "open" as one of the names, indeed as the name *kat' exochen* {preeminent}, of being and of world. More than ten years later, in full world war, Heidegger returns to this concept and traces a summary genealogy of it. That it arose out of the eighth *Duino Elegy* was, in a certain sense, obvious; but in being adopted as the name of being ("the open, in which every being is freed ... is being itself!"), Rilke's term undergoes an essential reversal, which Heidegger seeks to emphasize in every way. For in the eighth *Elegy* it is the animal (*die Kreatur*) that sees the open "with all its eyes," in distinct contrast to man, whose eyes have instead been "turned backward" and placed "like traps" around him. While man always has the world before him-always only stands "facing opposite" (*gegenüber*) and never enters the "pure space" of the outside-the animal instead moves in the open, in a "nowhere without the no."

This reversal of the hierarchical relationship between man and animal is precisely what Heidegger calls into question. First of all, he writes, if we think of the open as the name of what philosophy has thought of as *aletheia*, that is, as the unconcealedness-concealedness of being, then this is not truly a reversal here, because the open evoked by Rilke and the open that Heidegger's thought seeks to give back to thought have nothing in common. "For the

open meant by Rilke is not the open in the sense of the unconcealed. Rilke knows and suspects nothing of *alētheia*, no more than Nietzsche does.² At work in both Nietzsche and Rilke is that oblivion of being "which lies at the foundation of the biologism of the nineteenth century and of psychoanalysis" and whose ultimate consequence is "a monstrous anthropomorphization of . . . the animal and a corresponding animalization of man."³ Only man, indeed only the essential gaze of authentic thought, can see the open which names the unconcealedness of beings. The animal, on the contrary, never sees this open.

Therefore neither can an animal move about in the closed as such, no more than it can comport itself toward the concealed. The animal is excluded from the essential domain of the conflict between unconcealedness and concealedness. The sign of such an exclusion is that no animal or plant "has the word."⁴

At this point Heidegger, in an extremely dense page, explicitly evokes the problem of the difference between animal environment and human world which was at the center of the 1929-30 course:

For the animal is in relation to his circle of food, prey, and other animals of its own kind, and it is so in a way essentially different from the way the stone is related to the earth upon which it lies. In the circle of the living things characterized as plant or animal we find the peculiar stirring of a motility by which the living being is "stimulated," i.e., excited to an emerging into a circle of excitability on the basis of which it includes other things in the circle of its stirring. But no motility or excitability of plants and animals can ever bring the living thing into the free in such a way that what is stimulated could ever let the thing which excites "be" what it is even merely as exciting, not to mention what it is before the excitation and without it. Plant and animal depend on something outside of themselves without ever "seeing" either the outside or the inside, i.e., without ever seeing their being unconcealed in the free of being. It would never be possible for a stone, any more than for an airplane, to elevate itself toward the sun in jubilation and to stir like the lark, and yet not even the lark sees the open.⁵

The lark (this symbol, in our poetic tradition, of the purest amorous impulse—one thinks, for example, of Bemart de Ventadom's *lauzeta*) does not see the open, because even at the moment in which it rushes toward the sun with the greatest abandon, it is blind to it; the lark can never disconceal the sun as a being, nor can it comport itself in any way toward the sun's concealedness (just like Uexkiill's tick with respect to its disinhibitors). And precisely because the "essential border between the mystery of the living being (plant or animal) and the mystery of what is historical"⁶ is neither experienced nor thematized in Rilke's poetry, the poetic word here falls short of a "decision capable of founding history," and is constantly exposed to the risk of "an unlimited and groundless anthropomorphization of the animal," which even places the animal above man and in a certain way makes a "super-man"? of it.

If the problem then is one of defining the border—at once the separation and proximity—between animal and man, perhaps the moment has come to attempt to pin down the paradoxical ontological status of the animal environment as it appears in the 1929-30 course. The animal is at once open and not open—or, better, it is neither one nor the other: it is *open in a nondisconcealment* that, on the one hand, captivates and dislocates it in its disinhibitor with unmatched vehemence, and, on the other, does not in any way disconceal as a being that thing that holds it so taken and absorbed. Heidegger seems here to oscillate between two opposite poles, which in some ways recall the paradoxes of mystical knowledge—or, rather, nonknowledge. On the one hand, captivation is a more spellbinding and intense openness than any kind of human knowledge; on the other, insofar as it is not capable of disconcealing its own disinhibitor, it is closed in a total opacity. Animal captivation and the openness of the world thus seem related to one another as are negative and positive theology, and their relationship is as ambiguous as the one which simultaneously opposes and binds in a secret complicity the dark night of the mystic and the clarity of rational knowledge. And it

is perhaps to make a tacit, ironic allusion to this relationship that Heidegger feels the need at a certain point to illustrate animal captivity with one of the oldest symbols of the *unio mystica*, the moth that is burned by the flame which attracts it and yet obstinately remains unknown to the end. The symbol here shows itself to be inadequate because, according to the zoologists, what the moth is primarily blind to is precisely the non-openness of the disinhibitor, its own remaining captivated by it. While mystical knowledge is essentially the experience of a nonknowledge and of a concealment as such, the animal cannot comport itself toward the not open; it remains excluded precisely from the essential domain of the conflict between disconcealment and concealment.

Nevertheless, in Heidegger's course the animal's poverty in world is at times reversed into an incomparable wealth, and the thesis according to which the animal is lacking in world is called into question as an undue projection of the human world onto the animal.

The difficulty of the problem lies in the fact that in our questioning we must always interpret the poverty in world and the peculiar encirclement of the animal in such a way that we end up talking as if that to which the animal relates ... were a being, and as if the relation were an ontological relation that is manifest to the animal. The fact that this is not the case compels us to the thesis that the *essence of life is accessible only through a destructive observation*, which does not mean that life is something inferior or that it is at a lower level in comparison with human Dasein. On the contrary, life is a domain which possesses a wealth of being-open, of which the human world may know nothing at all.⁸

But then, when it appears that the thesis must be unreservedly abandoned, and animal environment and human world seem to diverge into a radical heterogeneity, Heidegger proposes it once again through a reference to the famous passage in the Letter to the Romans 8:19, in which Paul evokes the creature's yearning expectation for redemption, so that the animal's poverty in world now appears to reflect "a problem internal to animality itself":

We must, then, *leave open the possibility* that the authentic and explicitly metaphysical understanding of the essence of world compels us to understand the animal's not-having of world as a *doing-without after all*, and to find a *being-poor* in the manner of being of the animal as such. The fact that biology recognizes nothing of the sort is no counter-argument against metaphysics. That perhaps only poets occasionally speak of this is an argument that metaphysics cannot be allowed to cast to the winds. In the end the Christian faith is not necessary in order to understand something of the word which Paul (Romans 8:19) writes concerning the *apokaradokia tēs ktiseos*, the yearning expectation of creatures and creation, the paths of which, as the Fourth Book of Ezra 7:12 says, have become narrow, doleful, and tiresome in this aeon. But nor is any pessimism required in order to develop the *animal's poverty in world as a problem internal to animality itself*. For with the animal's being open for that which disinhibits, the animal in its captivity is essentially held out in something other than itself, something that indeed cannot be manifest to the animal either as a being or as a non-being, but which, insofar as it disinhibits ... brings an *essential disruption* [wesenhafte Erschütterung] into the essence of the animal.⁹

As the *apokaradokia* suddenly brought the creature closer to man in the Pauline Letter's perspective of messianic redemption, so too the essential disruption that the animal experiences in its being exposed in a nondisconcealment drastically shortens the distance that the course had marked out between animal and man, between openness and non-openness. That is to say that poverty in world-in which the animal in some way feels its own not-being-open-has the strategic function of ensuring a passage between the animal environment and the open, from a perspective in which captivity as the essence of the animal is "as it were a suitable background against which the essence of humanity can now be set off."¹⁰

At this point Heidegger can return to the discussion of boredom that had occupied him in the first part of the course, and can put animal captivity and the fundamental *Stimmung* that he had called "profound boredom" (*tief: Langeweile*) in unexpected resonance with each other:

It will be seen how this fundamental attunement,¹¹ and everything bound up with it, is to be set off over against what we claimed as the essence of animality, over against captivation. This contrast will become all the more decisive for us insofar as captivation, as precisely the essence of animality, apparently finds itself in the closest proximity to what we identified as a characteristic element of profound boredom and described as the *enchantment-enchainment* [Gebanntheit] of Dasein within beings in their totality. Certainly it will be seen that this closest proximity of both essential constitutions is merely deceptive, and that an abyss lies between them which cannot be bridged by any mediation whatsoever. Yet in that case the total divergence of these two theses will suddenly become very clear to us, and thereby the essence of world.¹²

Captivation appears here as a sort of fundamental *Stimmung* in which the animal does not open itself, as does Dasein, in a world, yet is nevertheless ecstatically drawn outside of itself in an exposure which disrupts it in its every fiber. And the understanding of the human world is possible only through the experience of the "closest proximity"-even if deceptive-to this *exposure without disconcealment*. Perhaps it is not the case that being and the human world have been presupposed in order then to reach the animal by means of subtraction-that is, by a "destructive observation"; perhaps the contrary is also, and even more, true, that is, that the openness of the human world (insofar as it is also and primarily an openness to the essential conflict between disconcealment and concealment) can be achieved only by means of an operation enacted upon the not-open of the animal world. And the place of this operation-in which human openness in a world and animal openness toward its disinhibitor seem for a moment to meet-is boredom.

§ 14 Profound Boredom

Boredom is the desire for happiness left in its pure state.

- Giacomo Leopardi

The discussion of boredom occupies sections 18-39 (nearly one hundred and eighty pages) of the course and thus constitutes the broadest analysis Heidegger ever dedicated to a *Stimmung* (in *Sein und Zeit* the discussion of anxiety takes up only eight pages). After having raised the problem of how something like an attunement-that is, the fundamental manner in which Dasein is always already pre-disposed, and thus the most originary way in which we encounter ourselves and others-must be understood in general, Heidegger articulates his analysis by following the three forms or degrees through which boredom progressively intensifies until it reaches the figure that he defines as "profound boredom" (*tieft Langeweile*). These three forms converge in two characteristics or "structural moments" (*Strukturmomente*) that, according to Heidegger, define the essence of boredom. The first is *Leergelassenheit*, being-left-empty, abandonment in emptiness. Heidegger begins with a description of what must have appeared to his eyes as a sort of *locus classicus* of the experience of boredom.

We are sitting, for example, at the tasteless station of some lonely minor railway. It is four hours until the next train arrives. The district is unattractive. We do have a book in our rucksack, though-shall we read? No. Or think through a problem, some question? We are unable to. We read the timetables or study the table giving the various distances from this station to other places we are not otherwise acquaint-