Giulia Gandolfi The Living and Its Norm: Is There an Anthropological Claim in Georges Canguilhem's Biological Philosophy?

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Although linking Georges Canguilhem's work with anthropology might seem bold, some clues in his works (1989, 2008) suggest that an anthropological claim may exist within his biological philosophy. Specifically, this claim emerges in connection with Canguilhem's interest in the study of life. Therefore, this article focuses on his "mature" period, and in particular on his concept of biological philosophy. I explore how a philosophical inquiry into life - that starts from biological issues – allows us to assert an anthropological dimension in Canguilhem's work. This anthropological claim is fundamentally different from both biological anthropology and the German tradition of philosophical anthropology. Indeed, I propose that, according to Canguilhem, the anthropological dimension should be sought in human normativity and its uniqueness: as exemplified by the relationships between technology and science, life and knowledge, normativity is revealed as a specific anthropological feature in the articulation of the rationality-irrationality nexus. In investigating human normativity, this article raises questions that have often been underexplored by critics, such as whether Canguilhem's philosophy is naturalistic or anti-naturalistic, and whether normativity should be defined as anthropocentric. This article delves into these issues aiming to demonstrate that, although Canguilhem never took an explicit stance on them, we can find – in his work, and with the help of his unpublished materials – at least a preliminary answer to these problems.