
Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*: National Socialism, Antisemitism, and the History of Being¹

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Introduction

The controversies surrounding Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism began soon after his early support of the movement and his implementation of its university politics as rector of the University of Freiburg. Adolf Hitler was appointed German Chancellor on January 30, 1933 and Heidegger officially joined the party on May 1, 1933. Heidegger would only serve as rector for one year, from April 21, 1933 to April 23, 1934. It was an eventful year in which the National Socialist policy of *Gleichschaltung* ("coordination"), the subordination of the educational system and all other dimensions of public and private life to party power, was enacted across German society. Heidegger's engagement on behalf of National Socialism came as a surprise to his contemporaries, as *Being and Time* and his other writings and lecture-courses had not been understood as supporting fascism. Criticisms of Heidegger's thinking in connection to his politics began in the surprised reaction of his students (e.g. Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, and Herbert Marcuse) and young scholars who had been inspired by his philosophy; most strikingly is the case of Emmanuel Levinas who had enthusiastically embraced Heidegger's thought after encountering it in 1929 and criticized the nexus between National Socialism and Heideggerian ontology in "Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" (1934) and *Of Escape* (1935).²

The character and scope of Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism has been a reoccurring question since 1933: Günther Anders, György Lukács, Theodor Adorno, and the young Jürgen Habermas, among others, confronted the issue in the 1940s and 1950s; poststructuralist French thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard engaged the question and its ramifica-

¹ I would like to express my appreciation to François Raffoul and Richard Polt for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. A previous shorter version of this chapter appeared as Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger's Black Notebooks: National Socialism, Antisemitism, and the History of Being," in François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, expanded paperback edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 484-493.

² Compare Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton 2003; Samuel Moyn, "Judaism against Paganism: Emmanuel Levinas's Response to Heidegger and Nazism in the 1930s," in: *History and Memory* (1998), 25-58 and Michael Fagenblat, *A Covenant of Creatures: Levinas's Philosophy of Judaism*, Stanford 2010, 70.

tions in the 1980s and 1990s.³ The publication of the first four volumes of Heidegger's so-called *Black Notebooks* (*Schwarze Hefte*; called black because of their covers) has reignited smoldering questions concerning the potential authoritarianism and antisemitism of the person and the thought.⁴ Although Heidegger distinguished Nazism from fascism and claimed his remarks on the Jews have nothing to do with antisemitism, his reflections remain troubling and problematic.⁵ The currently published *Notebooks* consist of *Überlegungen* (*Considerations*) II–XV (written from 1931 to 1941 and published in 2014 in GA volumes 94–96) and *Anmerkungen* (*Notes*) I–V (written from 1942 to 1948 and published in 2015 in GA 97).⁶

The extensive discussion of the *Notebooks* has primarily centered on a few politically charged remarks; most of the content consists of philosophical reflections elaborating on themes found in other writings and lecture-courses from the Nazi era. They neither develop an esoteric political philosophy nor a secret National Socialist vision. Polemical accounts (notably, those of Emmanuel Faye and Richard Wolin) have exaggerated the intrinsic and systematic character of antisemitism and National Socialism operating throughout the entirety of his philosophy.⁷ Apologetic tendencies have dismissed political questions as irrelevant to the task of philosophy, established a strict dualistic demarcation between the thought and the person, or characterized questioning and criticism as a denial of the right to read Heidegger. The fact of his commitment to an explicitly totalitarian and racist government that systematically undermined the rights of German citizens while he worked on the regime's behalf and, after Heidegger's withdrawal from active political life, resulted in mass-persecution of minorities and the mass production of human-made death is undeniable. The weight of this fact is sufficient to justify critically questioning both the person and the philosophy. National Socialism and the Holocaust are not negligible historical phe-

³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Chicago 1989; Jean-François Lyotard, Heidegger and "the Jews" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

⁴ Questions raised in Karl Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, Munich 1978, 57–9.

⁵ See Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII–XI: Schwarze Hefte 1939/1939*, hrsg. von Peter Trawny (GA 95), Frankfurt am Main 2014, 408 and Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V; Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948*, hrsg. von Peter Trawny (GA 97), Frankfurt am Main 2015, 159. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI: Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938*, hrsg. von Peter Trawny (GA 94), Frankfurt am Main 2014. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII–XV: Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941*, hrsg. von Peter Trawny (GA 96), Frankfurt am Main 2014, 97

⁶ Richard Rojcewicz has titled his forthcoming translation "Ponderings" rather than "Considerations"; Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI: Black Notebooks 1931–1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

⁷ A typical example of the former tendency is the work of Emmanuel Faye; on the fairness and accuracy of his account, which does not extend to Faye's more recent treatment of the *Black Notebooks*, see the powerful and insightful critique developed in Thomas Sheehan, "Emmanuel Faye: The Introduction of Fraud into Philosophy?" *Philosophy Today*, 59.3 (Summer 2015): 367–400.

nomena to be swept aside as undeserving and unworthy of thought. Heidegger's general silence and few casual remarks during the postwar are indications of a deep—yet not necessarily “great” as Heidegger would later describe it—failure of thinking to confront its finitude and facticity. If such events are not worthy of thought, something has gone wrong with thinking and the defense of Heidegger sacrifices too much and too many.

Is Heidegger's philosophy then “contaminated”—to adopt a word used in some discussions—by National Socialism and antisemitism? The question of Heidegger's involvement is not one of an external contamination but the internal structure and unthought of Heidegger's thinking. It is not so much an issue of whether works associated with the proper name “Heidegger” should or should not be read; they will continue to be. The matter to be thought is how they are interpreted as philosophical works that are bound up with the historical life of a person that Heidegger himself would dismiss as merely biographical and “historiological.” It is precisely such an interpretation, however, that the “Heidegger case,” and his changing and at times contradictory self-narratives, demands careful contextualization for the sake of philosophical and social-political reflection.⁸

Heidegger's ambivalence: The contexts of the *Black Notebooks*

How then might Heidegger be read in this politically charged context? First, as Jean Grondin notes, the works should be read.⁹ As they are read, Heidegger emerges as a complex and ambivalent figure motivated by his perceived failures and sense of crisis.¹⁰ Ambivalence is, however, found throughout the reception of his thought, in which he has been read as both an opponent and proponent of oppression, and in the sources that inspired this legacy. Heidegger's thinking promises an emancipation of ways of being in their multiplicity, especially in the 1920s, and ways of being more experientially attuned and responsive to one's world. Despite his thinking of radical difference, his thought remains obsessed with the ultimate oneness of being (*Sein*) and a schematic and

⁸ An alternative conception of interpretation is called for that avoids the dualism between thinker and thinking evident in Heidegger's hermeneutics. I consider this point and examine Heidegger's problematic relationship with biographical interpretation and self-narrative in Eric S. Nelson, “What is Missing? The Incompleteness and Failure of Heidegger's Being and Time,” in: Lee Braver (ed.), *Being and Time, Division III, Heidegger's Unanswered Question of Being*, Cambridge, Mass. 2015, 197–218.

⁹ Jean Grondin, “The Critique and Rethinking of ‘Being and Time’ in the First Black Notebooks,” in: Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks*, Cambridge, Mass. 2015.

¹⁰ Compare Peter Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Frankfurt am Main 2015, 17.

fixed narrative of history that privileges the history of Occidental (*abendländisch*) philosophy and ignores material, social-political, and non-Western histories.¹¹ Heidegger engages the radical historicity of the human condition while formalizing history into a narrative about the fateful destiny of metaphysics from Greece to Germany.

Heidegger is not a political theorist or thinker in any ordinary sense; he never developed a political philosophy and his political comments reflect a primarily anti-political attitude—which is itself an elitist form of the political, as Habermas has argued concerning Heidegger and the German “mandarins.”¹² Politically, mirroring his philosophical stance of the unity of being and the multiplicity of beings, Heidegger shows inclinations toward totalitarianism and anarchism; politics is interpreted through the prism of the history of being and this history relies on a language of destructuring and emancipation in the “other” of history. Historically considered, Heidegger’s use of language is—as Adorno has aptly described in *The Jargon of Authenticity*—fundamentally reactionary, shaped by sentiments of nostalgia, home and homeland, and rural life.¹³ However, despite Heidegger’s own self-interpretation, scholars such as Reiner Schürmann, John McCumber, and Peter Trawny have argued that Heidegger’s thought has anarchistic and emancipatory tendencies that destabilize reified conventional and metaphysical concepts. Heidegger deployed a radical language of philosophical contestation, revolution, and liberation that can have anarchistic social-political implications, as it reveals the alterity of the past and present in challenging the conformity and oppressiveness of the conventionally experienced present.¹⁴

Heidegger’s initial support in 1933 and later elitist doubts concerning National Socialism reveal a figure outside of the mainstream of National Socialist

¹¹ On the parameters of Heidegger’s ethnocentrism, and his binary opposition of the Occidental/Oriental, see Eric S. Nelson, “Heidegger, Misch, and the Origins of Philosophy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 39 (Supplemental Issue 2012), 10–30.

¹² GA 97: 44–45 is an example of Heidegger’s global rejection of the category of the political. Heidegger is, according to Habermas, “the very embodiment of the arrogant German mandarin par excellence.” Jürgen Habermas, *Europe: The Faltering Project*, Cambridge 2014, 3. Compare his remark: “what was really offensive was the Nazi philosopher’s denial of moral and political responsibility for the consequences of the mass criminality about which almost no one talked any longer eight years after the end of the war. In the ensuing controversy, Heidegger’s interpretation, in which he stylized fascism as a ‘destiny of Being’ that relieved individuals of personal culpability, was lost from view. He simply shrugged off his disastrous political error as a mere reflex of a higher destiny that had ‘led him astray.’” Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 20.

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Evanston 1973.

¹⁴ Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, Bloomington 1990; John McCumber, *Metaphysics and Oppression: Heidegger’s Challenge to Western Philosophy*, Bloomington 1999; Peter Trawny, *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger’s Anarchy*, New York 2015.

politics and ideology while remaining in proximity and in its vicinity. It was widely known by late 1934 in the German-speaking world that Heidegger was “finished,” as he had fallen out of favor with the students, professors, and the party.¹⁵ Despite his efforts as rector, Heidegger did not speak in the same way as the National Socialist party philosophers and ideologues and his philosophy could not be embraced by the National Socialist movement. Throughout the *Notebooks*, it is obvious that Heidegger has an elitist “German mandarin” distaste for numerous elements of the National Socialist movement: its vulgar populism, biological and pseudo-Darwinian racism, cultural and media politics, and worship of technology and world-view thinking. He increasingly despises its commitment to the primacy of “organization” and technology, and its use of calculative planning in popular culture, propaganda, and racial eugenics. Central elements of National Socialism are interpreted as symptoms of the crisis of modernity that the movement, as “the confrontation of planetary technology and modern humanity,” was supposed to contest and overcome.¹⁶ Heidegger’s failure as rector in Freiburg, as well as his failed embrace of National Socialism, is identified with the being-historical failure of National Socialism to realize its inner promise and potential. National Socialism was in Heidegger’s estimation an initially promising response to the nihilism of modernity; its being-historical moment was missed, the opportunity for another beginning lost, and it revealed itself as yet another insidious and derivative version of modernism along with its primary forms that he designated Americanism, Bolshevism, and “Jewry” (*Judentum*).¹⁷ As his initial enthusiasm for National Socialism deteriorated, it is increasingly perceived as a betrayal of the destiny of being and as fated to be surpassed by its superior American and Soviet antagonists with which it is metaphysically the same.¹⁸

In the *Notebooks*, Heidegger’s commitment to National Socialism transitions from initial enthusiasm to disappointment and suspicion. The *Black Note-*

¹⁵ Rudolf Carnap mentioned these developments in his diaries on three occasions in 1934–1935 (VII / 1934; 05.09.1935; and 05.12.1935). Unpublished: Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, Carnap Papers (RC XXXX). Heidegger’s distancing himself from politics in 1934 and subsequent critical remarks about National Socialism present a challenge to the strong account of his involvement with National Socialism. One response, as Jaspers argued in 1949, maintained that a disgruntled Heidegger began to reject the movement in 1934 because it rejected and sidelined him and there was never a decisive break (Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, 58).

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Work and Weltanschauung: the Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective,” in: *Critical Inquiry*, 15:2 (Winter 1989), 452–454. On Heidegger’s increasing alienation from National Socialism due to its failure to address the fundamental crisis tendencies of modernity, compare Charles Bambach, *Heidegger’s Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism and the Greeks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 270.

¹⁷ Heidegger uses the German words *Judentum* (which can mean either Judaism or Jewry) and, less frequently, *Judenschaft*.

¹⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII–XV* (GA 96), 243.

books, like his other unpublished writings and lecture-courses, are full of critical remarks about the movement and his times. Apologists will make good use of these passages; yet they remain insufficient for a social-political critique of National Socialism, which Heidegger never offered, and they can be disturbing in their own ways, since Heidegger's stance toward National Socialism is increasingly "critical" only in a broadly right-wing and elitist manner. Heidegger still maintained in the mid-1930s after his "withdrawal" from politics that National Socialism must still be "affirmed" even though it is not the radical new inception he sought "from 1930 until 1934" (GA 95: 408).¹⁹ National Socialism must be thoughtfully affirmed with necessity as the ultimate late-modern metaphysical movement, at this point, and is not yet considered an "inferior" realization of technological modernity in comparison with Western democracy and Eastern communism as it will be portrayed in the later *Notebooks*.

Heidegger's growing distance from the movement never encompassed political criticisms of the destruction of democracy, citizen rights, and human lives that would be merely ontic and would for him reproduce the same paradigm of modernity. There is likewise no departure from the centrality of the Occidental, and Germany as the decisive land of the middle within the Occident. In contrast to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin, which should be exemplary for the renewal of German existence, Heidegger came to believe that National Socialism would ultimately prove to be too inadequate and weak for this challenge and, in the end, must perish to superior forms of modernity. National Socialist Germany had no historical responsibility or uniqueness for Heidegger; it merely conformed to and reproduced Americanism, Bolshevism, and Jewry. This is how Heidegger, in a menacing remark made between 1942 and 1945, can blame Jewry, as the "principle of destruction" that helped unleash the paradigm of technological modernity, for their own self-destruction.²⁰ Heidegger's problematic remarks are ambiguous and in need of careful interpretation: are Heidegger's anti-Semitic remarks motivated by his anti-Christian polemic, which is a much more central thread throughout the *Notebooks*, or vice versa? Is Jewry the "principle of destruction" in a material sense or in the being-historical sense that Marxism is construed by Heidegger as inverting and destroying the predominant form of modern metaphysics? Is Heidegger blaming the Jews for their own physical self-destruction or maintaining that National Socialism is destroying itself with the persecution of the Jews? In either case, whether he was committed to vulgar antisemitism or an ontological conception of the Jews, Heidegger was unconcerned with the realities of Jewish suffering. In the fourth volume

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII–XI* (GA 95), 508.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20. For a careful and comprehensive account of Heidegger and the Jews, see Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger und die Juden*, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

of the *Black Notebooks*, as in the previously published letter-exchange with his former student Herbert Marcuse, Heidegger is concerned with German suffering at the hands of the Americans and Russians and expresses no concern for victims of National Socialism.²¹ “Hitler,” who is apparently no worse than Roosevelt or Stalin for Heidegger, does not name historical horror after the end of the war. Hitler—Heidegger remarked in one postwar comment—is the American excuse for the destruction of Europe.²²

Vulgar and superior racism?

Heidegger repeatedly denied that he was antisemitic, and convinced his former student Hannah Arendt after their postwar meeting. As already noted, Heidegger made occasional antisemitic remarks and possibly engaged in antisemitic actions when he was active on behalf of the movement in 1933/34; these include his correspondence, possibly his activities against Jewish faculty enacting the policy of *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) as rector of the University of Freiburg, and the *Black Notebooks* and other writings from the 1930s and 1940s.²³ Heidegger, for instance, commented in the 1933/4 seminar on *Nature, History, State* on “the nature of our German space” and the “Semitic nomads” for whom “it will perhaps never be revealed at all.”²⁴ The *Notebooks* should not be a surprise as other testimonials to his antisemitism and indifference to the fate of the Jews have already appeared in print.²⁵ They do provide further evidence and context for Heidegger’s antisemitism. It might be argued that these remarks are relatively few in number and Heidegger does not make antisemitism the center of his thought in contrast to National Socialist racial ideologues. Probably this is what Heidegger believes when he denied that he is an anti-Semite. Most of the *Black Notebooks* concern his own philosophical thinking; his socialpolitical complaints remain those of a philosopher who fails to engage the concrete structures and mechanisms of social-political life. Even if Heidegger did not engage in public antisemitic polemics, which National Socialists were unafraid to openly pursue, it does not remove the question. It also cannot be solely a question of the quantity of statements. Heidegger’s “few” remarks are sufficiently

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97); “An Exchange of Letters, Herbert Marcuse and Martin Heidegger,” ed. Richard Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1993), 152–64.

²² Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 250.

²³ For example, there are a number of comments published in his correspondence with his wife: “*Mein liebes Seelchen!*”. *Briefe Martin Heideggers an seine Frau Elfride, 1915–1970*, herausgegeben und kommentiert von Gertrud Heidegger, München 2005.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Nature, History, State: 1933–1934*. Tr. and ed. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, London 2013, 56.

²⁵ See Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993.

disturbing. They may not express a biological, anthropological, or Social Darwinian racism given his long-standing rejection of racial thinking and dismissal of the rhetoric of blood and soil. Nonetheless, Heidegger's remarks concerning Germans and Jews bear a family resemblance with radical Germanic thinking. They belong to a German-centric, ethnocentric, and folkish (*völkisch*) way of thinking; they evoke the Nazi idea of a world Jewish conspiracy; and they portray Jews (including his own teacher Husserl) in stereotyped ways as calculative, cunning, and criminal.²⁶ He blames the European Jews for their own self-destruction and for creating the racism and totalitarianism that produced their National Socialist versions.²⁷

Perhaps these questionable remarks reflect a “merely” contingent or ontic racism that can be distinguished from the ecstasy and height of Heidegger's philosophical endeavors.²⁸ Perhaps, according to one line of interpretation, his antisemitic remarks are contingent because of the very character of Heidegger's antisemitism. Heidegger can picture the Jews at most as one part of Western modernity and as an accidental nonoccidental addition to the history of the West that is decisively Greco-German for Heidegger. Heidegger cannot allow a Jewish phase of Western metaphysics, as Jewry is outside of the Occident in its inception and its destiny that will be decided by the Germans.²⁹ Jews cannot fundamentally define technological modernity, as Wolin and others have maintained, insofar as it is a phase of the history of being from which they are “outside” and excluded. Jewry can only reflect occidental history as the “principle of destruction” such as the Marxist destructive reversal of German idealism.³⁰ Heidegger maintained that Jewry cannot be creative and innovative, but only destructively enact possibilities given to them by Western, essentially Greek, metaphysics.³¹ Consequently, Jewish philosophers from Maimonides to his teacher Husserl cannot, on principle, occupy a significant role in Heidegger's depiction of the history of philosophy.³² Heidegger's exclusion of Jews as outside and other from the history of Western philosophy and originary thinking is behol-

²⁶ See GA 96: 46–47, 56–57, 242–245, 262, 266; GA 97: 438; compare Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos*, 87.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20, 438.

²⁸ On the contrast between philosophical ecstasy and political catastrophe in Heidegger, see David Farrell Krell, *Ecstasy, Catastrophe: Heidegger from Being and Time to the Black Notebooks* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20. Heidegger elsewhere denied the Nazi identification of Jewry and Marxism, at least in its “final form” (Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (GA 65), Frankfurt am Main 1989, 54).

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20.

³² Heidegger probably considered earlier forms of Jewish philosophy as derivations of scholasticism. Heidegger barely discussed Maimonides or Spinoza in his works. He remarked in 1936 that Spinoza's philosophy is determined by Cartesianism and Scholasticism and cannot be

den to an ontological rendition of ethnocentrism based in the being-historical priority of Greece-Germany that is reiterated throughout his later works.

Heidegger's few remarks concerning Jews and Jewry, given their relation to the context of his thinking and his consistent avoidance and silence, are enough to indicate that his antisemitism is not accidental or superficial.³³ But given the role of Jewry as one symptom of the history of metaphysics and modernity, which is a consequence of the history of essentially Greek metaphysics, Heidegger's antisemitism is inconsistent with more radical antisemitic visions. Heidegger to this extent should not be classified as a racial ideologue, as he rejected this idea as calculative and reductive throughout the *Notebooks*. He repeatedly criticized racial theory and its anthropological and biologicistic (i. e. modern metaphysical) presuppositions throughout his lectures and writings of the 1930s and 1940s.³⁴ He rejected the racial interpretation of "Volk" (the people) maintained by National Socialism without, however, rejecting the notion of the culturally essentialist vision of the unity, truth, and essence of the people (*Volk*).³⁵ This notion of *Volk* was articulated, after his initial enthusiasm for the National Socialist movement faded, in relation to the history of philosophy and the poetry of Hölderlin.³⁶ Accordingly, despite his rejection of racial thinking, as part of the problematic of modernity, his thinking remains fundamentally ethnocentric; it remains centered on a Greco-German axis that marginalizes and minimalizes the multiplicity of philosophical perspectives. Heidegger maintained that his thinking is nonsubject-oriented such that the *Volk* cannot be understood as a collective subject that constitutes its world through its will and understanding, much less through its anthropological, biological, and racial characteristics. Nonetheless, the German people are an ontologically and being-historically chosen people who are marked out by the history of being as the ones who pose, decide, and renew the question of being.

Heidegger is committed to a German-centric vision of being from his embrace of National Socialism, as evident in the Rectorate speech, until the end of

equated with Jewish philosophy (Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit [1809]*, hrsg. von Ingrid Schüßler [GA 42], Frankfurt am Main 1988, 115.

³³ For a critical portrait of the potentially systematic character of Heidegger's antisemitism, see Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos*, especially 59–69. If "Bolshevism" and "Marxism" are taken as code words for Judaism, as was frequently the case in Nazi Germany and is clearly the case in some passages in Heidegger, such as Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 20, then antisemitism is even more deeply ingrained in his thinking of the 1930s and 1940s.

³⁴ Examples include Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI* (GA 94), 338, 475–476; Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 12.

³⁵ On *Volk*, see Martin Heidegger, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*, hrsg. von Günter Seibold (GA 38), Frankfurt am Main 1998, 65, and compare Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos*, 27, 65.

³⁶ For a careful study of Heidegger's ideological context, and its divergence from ordinary National Socialism, see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism and the Greeks*, Ithaca 2003.

his life, as visible in the “Spiegel Interview” (1966) that repeats the same themes developed in the 1930s and 1940s.³⁷ Heidegger undoubtedly abandoned National Socialism in some sense in his own mind in the 1930s and 1940s and retrospectively justified his engagement for National Socialism as “failing greatly.”³⁸ This is evident in his remarks about the movement in the *Black Notebooks*. Heidegger dismissed their vulgar racism and populism, their endorsement of technology and uses of popular culture and politics. He repeatedly expresses distaste for their vulgarity and places National Socialism into the fallenness of the times and the history of being culminating in technological modernity. Nonetheless, Heidegger never questioned National Socialism in a specifically ethical or normative social-political manner. National Socialism failed Heidegger’s expectations for a decisive being-historical renewal of German Dasein and this was Heidegger’s “failing greatly.” Heidegger failed to confront his own personal and intellectual complicity in the postwar period, and his remarks from 1944 to 1948 (in GA 97) show his continuing defiance and resentment in the face of the denazification campaign working against him.

Heidegger’s thinking is constitutively unable to respond to much less analyze basic elements of ethical life and social-political reality. There is no care for ethical prophecy that confronts injustice; nor is there concern for the obliteration of democracy and human rights or the destruction of non-German life.³⁹ After the war, he perceives in democracy a greater form of fascism.⁴⁰ When Heidegger mourns war and its death and devastation, he expresses concern only for German life and the only machinery of death mentioned is said to be aimed at Germany.⁴¹ This exclusive focus continues in the postwar period. When Marcuse asked Heidegger about the Holocaust, Heidegger could only respond by countering with German deaths in the fire-bombing of Dresden and the Soviet occupation of Eastern German territories.⁴²

Heidegger would never confront his own philosophical-historical conceptions that led to his involvement and complicity with National Socialism. His own collusion in this history is avoided and displaced into a narrative of the history of being such that no discussion of the person Martin Heidegger is permitted. There are no questions of personal individual responsibility and compli-

³⁷ “Der Spiegel’s Interview with Martin Heidegger (1966),” in: Richard Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy*, 91–116.

³⁸ This apologetic strategy is developed in the postwar *Notebooks*, see GA 97: 174–179; also compare Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*.

³⁹ Heidegger denounces the prophetic dimension (Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* [GA 97], 159), the openness of the public sphere (GA 97: 146f.), ethical judgment and guilt (ibid.) after the war, also in relation to Karl Jaspers.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 249.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 148.

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97); “An Exchange of Letters, Herbert Marcuse and Martin Heidegger,” in: Richard Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy*, 152–64.

city; there are no considerations of repentance, forgiveness, or redemption in Heidegger's vision of being. This banal indifference and refusal toward others is not "erring greatly"; it does not only reveal contingent flaws of personality and character that should be dismissed to remain in pure philosophy. It discloses, to speak in an Arendtian way, a fundamental thoughtlessness and inability to think at the core of Heidegger's thinking.

Further questions

There are a number of questions in need of further consideration.

The demarcation problem: both apologetic and polemic accounts of the "Heidegger controversy" remain closed to the unavoidable and necessary questions that must continue to be posed and reposed anew. The philosophy and the person cannot be as cleanly separated and demarcated as Heidegger thought or as his most dedicated followers hope. At the same time, the thinking necessarily outstrips the thinker and the philosophy calls for being encountered in its own terms.

Heidegger's questionable understanding of the biographical: Heidegger provided inconsistent self-narratives about his own history and has a questionable understanding of autobiography and biography in relation to philosophy. He rejects the role of biographical interpretation in philosophy. Heidegger's thinking denies local contextual historical and biographical interpretations (which are dismissed as historiographical history) for the sake of interpretation from the history of being (history understood as ontological event); yet it is precisely the former that the "Heidegger case," and his changing at times contradictory self-narratives, demands—careful contextualization for the sake of philosophical and social-political reflection. For Heidegger, it is the history of being and not Heidegger himself that is at stake. Yet the complexities and complications of his own life and thinking call for such a hermeneutics.

Heidegger's questionable understanding of ethics and politics: Heidegger's "failures" are more than a failure of a person; his philosophy is permeated by structural deficits that need to be addressed at the level of philosophy. There is no thinking of rights of individuals or minorities; there is no concern or care for the suffering of non-German others; democracy and self-organization are reductively taken to be only instruments of organizational planning and technological modernity. His fundamental critique of modernity concerns technology and is addressed through poetry. Ethical-political ideas such as justice, fairness, and equality, and structural problems of capital and bureaucratic power are ignored. All these are necessary for an adequate conception of politics that would challenge the types of power Heidegger leaves unquestioned.

Heidegger's questionable quasi-teleological conception of history stems

from Greece and culminates in the German encounter with modernity. Heidegger's conception of occidental history centers on the special ontological and philosophical rank and uniqueness of Germany. This vision is not identical to that of National Socialism and Heidegger uses it to challenge elements of National Socialism. Still, Heidegger's philosophy of history has its own questionable agenda. The idea of history that led to his engagement for and complicity with National Socialism still shape and are at work in his later thinking.

Conclusion

Heidegger wishes to construct a world that can greet and embrace the earth and allow it to flourish and humans to dwell in a more thankful, responsive, and attentive way.⁴³ Such aspects of Heidegger's writing, which are developed throughout the *Notebooks* in intriguing ways, continue to resonate and suggest why Heidegger will be continued to be read even as his more sinister thoughts are rightfully criticized and rejected. Heidegger's thinking of history has interruptive and an-archic impulses that can help motivate an encounter with history as event, as suggested earlier; it, nonetheless, is a vision of history without persons and without recognition of genuine suffering.⁴⁴ Heidegger's philosophy remains a touchstone for reflection even as its ethnocentric and depersonalizing tendencies deserve publicity and critical reflection.

⁴³ Compare Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V* (GA 97), 3.

⁴⁴ On Heidegger's conceptions of historicity and history, see Eric S. Nelson, "Questioning Practice: Heidegger, Historicity and the Hermeneutics of Facticity," in: *Philosophy Today* 44 (2001), 150–159; Eric S. Nelson, "History as Decision and Event in Heidegger," in: *Arbe*, IV: 8 (2007), 97–115; Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger, Levinas, and the Other of History." John Drabinski and E. S. Nelson, ed., *Between Levinas and Heidegger*, Albany 2014, 51–72.