



## Heidegger's "Politics" and the *Black Notebooks*

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### Article abstract

Under "politics" is included Heidegger's entanglement with National Socialism in the early 1930's, an analysis of his rectoral address, and his resignation as rector. An attempt is made to account for this involvement. Also under "politics" there are Heidegger's own sketchy, and largely unsuccessful, attempts at forging a philosophy of politics, a couple of which are examined, and critiqued, in detail. There is also a section on Heidegger's "anti-Semitism," especially as instantiated in the *Black Notebooks*, which have given rise to considerable controversy of late. An attempt is made to set this in its historical and cultural context. Included also are the many remarks, from the curious to the bizarre, that appear in the *Black Notebooks* concerning the social and political events of the time between 1931 and 1948. The article closes with what the author sees as the more important themes found in these volumes, which echo themes found in *Contributions to Philosophy (From the Event)* and in the Unpublished Treatises, part III of the *Gesamtausgabe*.

# HEIDEGGER'S "POLITICS" AND THE *BLACK NOTEBOOKS*

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**RÉSUMÉ :** Sous le terme « politique » il faut inclure l'imbroglia de Heidegger avec le National-Socialisme au début des années 1930, une analyse de son discours de rectorat, et sa démission comme recteur. On tente ici de rendre compte de cette implication. En outre, sous « politique » il y a lieu d'entendre les propres tentatives de Heidegger, sommaires et en grande partie sans succès, de forger une philosophie de la politique, dont quelques-unes sont examinées et critiquées de manière détaillée. Il y a aussi une section touchant l'« antisémitisme » de Heidegger, tel qu'illustré spécialement dans les Cahiers Noirs, lesquels ont donné lieu à une controverse considérable dernièrement. On tente de replacer cela dans son contexte historique et culturel. S'y ajoutent également les nombreuses remarques, allant du curieux au bizarre, qui apparaissent dans les Cahiers Noirs concernant les événements sociaux et politiques du temps entre 1931 et 1948. L'article conclut sur ce que l'auteur voit comme les plus importants thèmes à découvrir dans ces volumes, qui font écho aux thèmes qu'on trouve dans les Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis) ainsi que dans les traités non publiés de la troisième partie de la Gesamtausgabe.

**ABSTRACT :** Under "politics" is included Heidegger's entanglement with National Socialism in the early 1930's, an analysis of his rectoral address, and his resignation as rector. An attempt is made to account for this involvement. Also under "politics" there are Heidegger's own sketchy, and largely unsuccessful, attempts at forging a philosophy of politics, a couple of which are examined, and critiqued, in detail. There is also a section on Heidegger's "anti-Semitism," especially as instanced in the Black Notebooks, which have given rise to considerable controversy of late. An attempt is made to set this in its historical and cultural context. Included also are the many remarks, from the curious to the bizarre, that appear in the Black Notebooks concerning the social and political events of the time between 1931 and 1948. The article closes with what the author sees as the more important themes found in these volumes, which echo themes found in Contributions to Philosophy (From the Event) and in the Unpublished Treatises, part III of the Gesamtausgabe.

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Although far too much ink has been squeezed out on the subject of Heidegger's entanglement (*Verstrickung*) with National Socialism, saying something on the subject has become *de rigueur* for anyone wishing to say anything about the Heidegger after *Being and Time*. Also, both the historical reality of the political movement, and Heidegger's relation to it, work their way into the treatises unpublished in his lifetime (Part III of the *Gesamtausgabe*, henceforth GA with the volume and page number).

In the first place, one must agree with Heidegger's own judgment regarding himself. In a letter to Hannah Arendt on 12 April 1950, he writes : "I have neither experience nor talent in the political sphere."<sup>1</sup> The politics he knew — and even this he did not always correctly gauge — was the politics of academe.<sup>2</sup>

As I.D. Thompson remarks, the Rectoral Address and Heidegger's misadventure with National Socialism was really about education and the university : "In 1933, Heidegger seized on the National Socialist 'revolution' as an opportunity to enact the philosophical vision for a radical reform of the university that he had in fact been developing since 1911."<sup>3</sup> On this score Parvis Emad, one of the translators of Heinrich W. Petzet's chatty book on Heidegger, provides in his introduction an excellent exegesis of the Rectoral Address and its relation to Nazi ideology. As Emad flatly asserts : "His rectoral address is not a statement of the party's policy and does not articulate the party's ideology."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, conspicuous by its absence is any reference to National Socialist racial theories. Otto Pöggeler also points out that what Heidegger's 1933 lecture urged was the independence of the university, above all from political meddling.

Though one could argue that universities in Germany had never been entirely free from political influence. A professor received his call (*Ruf*) from the German province (*Landesstaat*) in which the university was located.<sup>5</sup> It was, after all, the province that paid the bills. The German professor, then as now, was considered a civil servant (which is why, like any civil servant, he or she is obliged to retire at the age of 65). Granted, the appointment was made on the recommendation of the university. And there was politics here as well, though it was of an academic sort. Heidegger, and

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1. *Letters 1925-1975 : Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger*, U. Ludz, ed., A. Shields, tr., New York, Harcourt, 2004, p. 76. Special thanks are due to the three anonymous francophone readers for the journal. Their interventions and suggestions have made for a better article.
  2. In a piece from around 1936, Heidegger shows deep bitterness with regard to the state of the university in Germany at the time (GA 76:209-238). He admits that during his Rectorate he made numerous and serious mistakes. The greatest, he says, was not reckoning with his so-called academic colleagues or the characterless treachery of the student organization ; then there was the ministry of education (GA 76:216). Elsewhere, he refers disparagingly to the Fuehrer's acolytes (*Führernachwuchses*) in connection with the founding of a "scientific" institute in Chiemsee (GA 76:163).
  3. *Heidegger on Ontotheology : Technology and the Politics of Education*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 78 ff., esp. p. 84. CAPUTO suggests yet another meaning of the "turn" in Heidegger, namely the turn as revolution, Heidegger as radical. *Demythologizing Heidegger*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 42-43, above all with respect to the university system in the Germany of the period. He goes on to say that in 1933 "Heidegger wanted the [National Socialist] revolution to be fired by revolutionary questioning : they [the Nazis] were worried that this might result in questioning the revolution" (*ibid.*, p. 114-115).
  4. Heinrich W. PETZET, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. XXIV. Bernhard RADLOFF also attempts to contextualize Heidegger's remarks concerning *Volk* in the rectoral address. "Heidegger's Retrieval of Aristotle and the Relation of Volk and Science in the Rector's Address of 1933," *Philosophy Today*, 47 (2003), p. 3-22.
  5. Speaking of "calls," Heidegger received a couple of them to come to Berlin, one in 1930 and another in 1933. He declined the invitations, preferring to stay in the "provinces." After the one in 1933, he was speaking with a 75-year-old farmer from the Schwarzwald, who had read about the invitation in the newspaper ; the farmer put his hand on Heidegger's shoulder and quietly shook his head from side to side, which Heidegger read as "unerbittlich Nein !" (GA 13:13).

others, wished to see the system changed, above all, with the advent of National Socialism and the transfer of the process of professorial appointments to a ministry in Berlin. This was political influence with a vengeance, above all given Nazi views regarding Jewish professors or outspoken critics of the regime. With the advent of the Nazis the system had become considerably more ominous. The independence (*Selbstbehauptung*) of the university was, indeed, in serious jeopardy.

Of course, there was a more personal complication in Heidegger's accession to the rectorship at Freiburg in 1933, namely the introduction of the "Führer-Prinzip" into the office of *Rektor*. In his attempt to ram through the reforms of the university that he felt were required, his approach became both ham-fisted and club-footed. Pöggeler referred to a personality change. Heidegger was, after all, not the first academic, who, thrust into a position of power, had that power go to his head. In a letter to Karl Jaspers (8 April 1950), Heidegger's wife Elfride had no difficulty diagnosing his "intoxication of power" after he had become rector in 1933.<sup>6</sup>

In his apologia for his rectorship (1933-1934), written a decade later in 1945, Heidegger attempts to put the best face possible on his involvement with the Nazis. He says that he joined the party purely as a matter of form (*Formsache*, GA 16:384), and did not participate in party activities. He had been told that his position as rector would be facilitated were he a member of the party (GA 16:400). Nevertheless, there are certainly things one wishes Heidegger had never said, as at the beginning of the Wintersemester (1933-1934) when, as rector, he told a group of students that theories and ideas should not be the rules of your life; "the Führer himself and he alone *is* the present and future reality of Germany and its law" (GA 16:184).<sup>7</sup> One could, of course, say that his behavior was no better, or worse, than that of other Germans at the time. Still, one could have hoped that it would have been considerably better. Lending his name, that of one of the leading philosophers in Germany at the time, could easily have been read as legitimizing the movement and its regime.

Already during the Christmas holidays of 1933, he writes in 1945, he realized that accepting the rectorship had been a blunder (*Irrtum*), and he resolved to resign at the end of the semester in 1934 (GA 16:400).<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, in 1934 he could still write: National Socialism is not some sort of theory but change, change from the bottom up, of the German, and of the European, world (GA 36/37:225). It is true, however, that already in the mid-30's he began giving lectures on Nietzsche, ostensibly to counter the National Socialist reading of the philosopher, or, as he says, to

6. *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence*, W. BIEMEL, H. SANER, ed., G.E. Aylesworth, tr., New York, Humanity Books, 2003, p. 188.

7. Though CAPUTO attempts to give a more benign interpretation to the statement, saying that it "may have been a warning not to heed party ideologues, but only the Führer, whose true leadership, Heidegger feared, was being subverted" (*Demythologizing Heidegger*, p. 221, n. 3). Nevertheless, at this point Heidegger's support for Hitler appears unreserved.

8. On the failure of the rectorship, from every point of view, see Hugo OTT, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, A. Blunden, tr., London, Fontana, 1994, p. 250 ff.

counter the nihilism exemplified ever more clearly in Fascism (GA 16:402).<sup>9</sup> Zaborowski writes that already by the summer of 1934 Heidegger's enthusiasm for Hitler had switched to Hölderlin.<sup>10</sup>

## I. POLITICAL THEORY

And Heidegger's politics? If by "politics" one means a treatise in political theory or a fully worked out philosophy of politics, he does not really have one. There are at least three different political philosophies in Fichte; and another one or two could be extracted from his writings.<sup>11</sup> Hegel wrote a philosophy of politics, the *Philosophy of Right*, one that is grounded in his ontology.<sup>12</sup> There is nothing even remotely comparable in the Heideggerian corpus. This is not to say that he does not have definite and strongly held political opinions, and that he is not loathe to express them, above all in the treatises and notebooks that remained unpublished in his lifetime.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, expressing political views does not constitute an overarching theory of politics, any more than a philosopher expressing opinions on theological issues, as Heidegger certainly does, makes him a theologian.

During the winter of 1933-1934, Heidegger did give a series of lectures ("for beginners") entitled "On the Essence and Concept of Nature, History and State."<sup>14</sup> What he says on the subject is preserved largely in student notes, and is, even then, no more than a sketch of a political theory. It begins with the notion of time and its meaning relative to nature and history, then proceeds to the state, asking rhetorically whether there can be a state without a history, indeed without *its* history. Implied in this is that it is not race (nature) that makes a people — "there is nothing biological about it" — but history. As he states in the *Black Notebooks*, what makes a people a people (*Volk*) is *its* history (GA 95:11). Further, what he means by "state" is not Hegel's *Staat*. Rather, he goes back to Aristotle: a *zōon politikon* in a *polis*, politics as part of a culture. Further, a political tradition is paramount; where it is lacking there will be only failure. The relation of the people (*Volk*) to the state is like that of beings to

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9. W.J. KORA-KARPOWICZ maintains: "Therefore if there is any political theory implied in his writings, it is certainly not one that can be associated with fascism or Nazism" ("Heidegger's Hidden Path: From Philosophy to Politics," *Review of Metaphysics*, 61 [2007], p. 307).
  10. Holger ZABOROWSKI, "Eine Frage von Irre und Schuld?", *Martin Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt a/M, Fischer, 2010, p. 432. Regarding the issue of Heidegger and Nationalsozialismus, Zaborowski concludes that there are no simple answers; his attitude toward it was, in the end, "ambivalent." The author goes on to speak of Heidegger's "Privatnationalsozialismus" (*ibid.*, p. 249-250).
  11. There is the 1796/1797 *Fundamental Principles of Natural Right According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*. The *Closed Commercial State* of 1800 looks like a species of socialism. His *Addresses to the German Nation*, lectures given in Berlin in 1807, is unabashed nationalism. And there is also the *Rechtslehre* of 1812.
  12. To which Heidegger briefly refers in attempting to differentiate between the masses and a *Volk* (GA 76:64-65), with assistance from Aristotle.
  13. Cf. Theodore KISIEL, "Heidegger's Philosophical Geopolitics," in R. POLT, G. FRIED, ed., *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 226-249.
  14. A. DENKER, H. ZABOROWSKI, ed., *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus I: Dokumente*, Freiburg, München, Alber, 2009, p. 69 ff.

being (the state). And as the human being (*Seiende*) is aware to its being (*Mensch-seins*), so the being of a people is aware of its basic relation to the state (being). The people love (*erōs*) the state. (Though Aristotle would have spoken of *philia* in this connection, not *erōs*.) In other words, he draws an analogy between the individual person relative to its being and between the people and the state. Thus, in the same way that the individual has a knowing and caring relation to its being so do the people have for the state.<sup>15</sup>

It is here that the relation between the state and the people might, indeed, be parsed to Heidegger's ontology. The state, he says, is a way of being (*Seinsweise*) of a people. "Das Volk ist das Seiende, dessen Sein der Staat ist" (the people are beings, whose being is the state). However, the introduction of the ontological difference between being (state) and beings (people), far from providing a basis for a viable political philosophy, in fact undermines it. For while it is true that being (the state) is always the being of beings (the people), only an anarchist would want to say that so far as beings are concerned (the people) that being (the state) is "nothing!" Indeed, there is a remark in the text saying that in a certain sense the being of the people and that of the state are separate.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, this attempt to derive a Heideggerian political theory based on his philosophy — if it is, indeed, his and not rather that of his auditors — will not survive the "not" of the ontological difference between being and beings. Further, given the force of his "ontological difference" between beings and being, to speak of a "politics of being," as some have, is at best misleading. For Heidegger politics would be an "ontic" science. So how could it determine the being of *Dasein*?<sup>17</sup>

In 1934 a course was announced entitled "Der Staat und die Wissenschaft." However, to the surprise and annoyance of Nazi officials in attendance, who apparently came loaded for bear, Heidegger announced in the first lecture that he would be lecturing on logic ("Ich lese Logik," GA 38 [editor's notes]). The number of auditors dropped off sharply after that.<sup>18</sup>

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

17. The *πόλις* is merely the site where *Dasein* is situated historically. See John TRYSSONE, "Heidegger et l'ambivalence de l'historialité du peuple," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 106 (2008), p. 742.

18. In the lectures he actually delivered, as again put together from student notes, there are allusions to the political; for example, reflections on what it means to be a *Volk* and how a people is constituted (GA 38:48-70). He notes that race (taken as the basis) is no less manifold than is a people; which is probably why the two get connected (GA 38:65). In the end, Heidegger finds the basis for a people and/or state in a decision (GA 38:70). At the end of November in the same year, he gave a talk in Konstanz entitled "The Present-Day Situation and the Future Task of German Philosophy." Here he speaks of social freedom, a people rendered free unto itself, as something that happens through the state (*Die Befreiung eines Volkes zu sich selbst aber geschieht durch den Staat*), through the independent recognition of one people (*Volk*) by another, not in virtue of some illusory league of nations. On the other hand, he goes on to say that a state exists only to the extent that it *becomes, comes to be* an *historical being* of beings; which is *what is meant by a people* (GA 16:333).

In 1934-1935, Heidegger did hold a seminar on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (GA 86:59-184). His own notes are highly schematic,<sup>19</sup> though there are also transcriptions of the sessions taken by students and colleagues.<sup>20</sup> In the seminar Heidegger points to the importance of Rousseau's notion of the "general will" for Hegel. Though he argues that in Hegel's view it represents only an abstract freedom. Hegel, says Heidegger, frees it and grounds it (GA 86:166). The difference between the two ? For Rousseau the state is freedom restricted (*einschränkend*) ; for Hegel it is as a being-in-the-world-of-the-state (*In-der-Welt-des-Rechts-sein*) that the human person is first historically free (GA 86:601-632). So far as any sort of social contract theory — or liberalism's "misreading of freedom" — would be concerned there is here too much emphasis on individual freedom (GA 86:604-605, 650). For Hegel individual freedom arises from the essence of Spirit, hence depends upon the state (GA 86:643), which is objective spirit.

In a system, Heidegger says, where the item is placed determines its essence or meaning ; and the placement of the state resides in morality (*Sittlichkeit*, in the social mores of the society). For Hegel "Right" is only in the state. It is the actuality of the social idea (GA 86:634,637). The "Philosophy of Right" is a specific title for the philosophy of freedom. It is the metaphysics of *objective* spirit, something historical in the history of Spirit (GA 86:575). The idea of the state, according to Heidegger's reading of Hegel, is not the rational for itself — Hegel's couplet : "what is rational is actual ; what is actual is rational" — but is rather the *unfolding* of the idea, that is, a people (GA 86:648). The individual can reject or dislike the government or one or the other of its agencies, but not *the state* (GA 86:641). Presumably because whatever freedom the individual citizen might exercise in rejecting some aspect of the state derives from the state.

Nonetheless, Rousseau remains important for Heidegger's reading of Hegel, above all with respect to the meaning of the will. The character or mark of the will is push (*Drang*), drive, wish, wanting ; in a word, striving (*Streben*). As such, will is freedom, and freedom will. Where there is Spirit there is will ; and where there is will, freedom (GA 86:626-627). For, he asks rhetorically, what does the will will but freedom ; which is itself ? (GA 86:127). The will as in-and-for-itself [its truth] wills freedom (GA 86:131). Thus he holds that the misuse of power in a state represents the misuse of the will (GA 86:73).

According to the editor of the volume, in his reflections on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* Heidegger is attempting to "Hegelianize National Socialism" (GA 86:903). I am not fully convinced that this is the case, any more than I am convinced that

19. Peter TRAWNY describes the effort as "fragmentarisch" (cf. "Heidegger und das Politische : Zum 'Rechtsphilosophie'-Seminar," *Heidegger-Studien*, 28 [2012], p. 47-66). Heidegger seemingly suggests the notion of care as the basis for a political philosophy. However, this is the *Sorge des Volkes* (through work, for example) vis à vis *das "Seiende"* (*nicht "für" das Volk*, p. 64). The people are to care for and care about the state. Seemingly, it does not necessarily work the other way around.

20. Which student notes from the winter seminar on "Hegel and the State" (1934-1935) conducted with the Jurist Erik Wolf, as with the earlier "On the Essence and Notion of Nature, History, and the State," should be used "mit besonderer Vorsicht," according to ZABOROWSKI, "Eine Frage von Irre und Schuld ?," p. 453.

Heidegger has here, or elsewhere, produced a political philosophy of his own, here with an assist from Hegel. It is true that Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* is designed to describe any and every form of governance, whether it be the needs-fulfillment sort of state (*Notstaat*) characteristic of bourgeois societies (GA 86:183), liberal democracies (which Heidegger insists Hegel also disapproves of (GA 86:167, and *passim*),<sup>21</sup> or bureaucratic forms of governance (*Beamtenstaates*, GA 86:85).

As far as the Heidegger of the *Black Notebooks* is concerned "the new politics" follows the inner essence of "technology" (GA 94:472). Indeed, it is technology that in his view gives the impulse to the bureaucratic form of governance (GA 94:477). Still, it is difficult to visualize Hegel's approving of a state established or given form (*durchgestaltet*) as a *Volk* being led along in its being by a *Führer* (GA 86:169), above all with an implied "personality cult," something that Heidegger himself criticizes in the Unpublished Treatises as the "triumph of subjectivity." I find it difficult to see how National Socialism could conceivably count as a genuine form of governance (polity) in the Hegelian sense. It was more an ideology. Granted, an ideology may have a political program, as National Socialism most certainly did ; but that would not necessarily qualify it as a polity. A leader doth not a state make. "L'État c'est moi" was a Bourbon delusion.

There is one element in Heidegger's reading of Hegel which strikes me as off the mark. He reads Hegel's notion of state as an organism, since it is Spirit, indeed the actualization of Spirit (GA 86:599). Heidegger seems to be reading *Geist* as though it were *Seele*, since he says that the tree, plant, etc., are organisms in that they have something of Spirit (GA 86:646). Indeed, he argues that the concept of life in Hegel comes out of theology : as the life of *Spirit*, that is, being ; which is being out of God (GA 86:708). Rather than viewing the state as an organism, Hegel maintains that there is an organic connection between the individual and the society in virtue of the fact that the relation is a "concrete" one : they grow up together (*con-crescere*) with each other.<sup>22</sup>

## II. HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

In 1936 Heidegger had apparently told his former student Karl Löwith, then living in Rome, that his philosophy and his politics are "essentially" connected. Löwith had expressed the view that Heidegger's joining the National Socialist party was of a piece with (*im Wesen*) his philosophy. "Heidegger agreed with me without hesitation, and added that his notion of 'historicity' [in *Being and Time* (§ 72-77)] was the basis for his political 'engagement' (*Einsatz*)."<sup>23</sup> However, if one reads this section of *Be-*

21. Citing the *Philosophie des Rechts*, § 260.

22. Cf. G.J. SEIDEL, *Activity and Ground : Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, Hildesheim, Ohms, 1976, p. 200-205.

23. According to Löwith, Heidegger went on to say that he was convinced that National Socialism was the designated path for Germany ; one had only to stay the course ("durchhalten") long enough (cf. Karl LÖWITH, *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933 : Ein Bericht*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 2007, p. 58).



*ing and Time*, especially § 74, and substitutes “joining the plot to assassinate Hitler” in place of “joining the SA” (the Storm Troopers), it is difficult to find anything there that would dictate the choice one way or the other. Löwith himself remarks that at the end of Heidegger’s rectoral address one was uncertain whether to take up Diels’ volumes on the Pre-Socratics or go off marching with the S.A.<sup>24</sup>

One may doubt that there is anything intrinsic in Heidegger’s philosophy that necessitated his becoming involved with National Socialism. The problem, and the tragedy, is that there was nothing in his philosophy, or in his personal life at the time, that could have, again at the time, given him pause from doing so. His earlier deep-seated, and conservative, Catholicism was very much in abeyance. He really had no political philosophy.<sup>25</sup> After all, what could be expected from one who views political science as the attempt to bridle the horse from the tail end, as he says in the *Black Notebooks* (GA 94:191). He had already earlier rejected the liberal democratic ideal (so much for England and/or America !), likely on the basis of the German experience with the Weimar Republic.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity in *Being and Time* could hardly provide ethical or political guidance of any sort. Indeed, Heidegger insists that the distinction is ethically neutral.<sup>27</sup>

Then, there was the pessimistic Spenglerian view of Europe, and Germany, as sliding into the abyss. As Heidegger says tersely in *Contributions* : “Our time is one of decline” (GA 65:397). Some have suggested that it was his “essentialism” that caused the difficulty. It is difficult to know what this might mean. The problem with Heidegger’s “metaphysics” is that there is no notion of essence, at least not in the traditional (or even in the Husserlian) sense of the term. “Wesen” he has turned into a verb so that in his thought it is impossible to distinguish between essentially different forms of governance, for example, or between the technology associated with mechanized farm production or agribusiness and the fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps or the Berlin blockade, starving countries into submission, and the making of hydrogen bombs.<sup>28</sup> The problem in Heidegger is not with a thinking that thinks in terms of essences but, on the contrary, with a thinking incapable of seeing essential differences.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 35. S.A. is *Sturm Abteilung*, storm troopers. These could be paramilitary, such as the “brown shirts” and, later, even university student groups. The SS was *Schutzstaffel*, security police, the infamous Gestapo. Though there was also the *Waffen SS*, an elite branch of the military.

25. As Fred A. OLAFSON remarks, Heidegger did have the notion of *Mitsein*, which he might have used as the basis for a social/political philosophy ; “but although Heidegger had developed the concept, he did not put it to any such use” (“Heidegger’s Thought and Nazism,” *Inquiry*, 43 [2000], p. 285).

26. He speaks scornfully of the self-assurance (*Selbstsicherheit*) of (democratic) liberalism and its cultural values ; which he views as not a real option (GA 65:53). Even after the war, and after Germany had embraced democracy, he said : “Our Europe is disintegrating under the influence of a democracy that comes from below against the many above” (PETZET, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976*, p. 222). In the *Black Notebooks* he speaks of democracy as a leveling (*Verflachung*), as the reduction to the least common denominator, anarchy (GA 97:459-461).

27. Herman PHILIPSE puts it baldly : “Martin Heidegger never produced a substantial theory of ethics” (“Heidegger and Ethics,” *Inquiry*, 42 [1999], p. 439) ; “his moral decisionism is equivalent to claiming that there is no ground of ethics at all” (*ibid.*, p. 458).

28. These remarks were made in the 1949 Bremen lectures (GA 79:27).

If one puts all this together, Heidegger's slip into Nazism becomes at least understandable, while still reprehensible. Again, however, it was not what was in his philosophy that led to his entanglement with National Socialism but what was not there, what was not, at the time, in his philosophy or in his personal life.

### III. HEIDEGGER'S "ANTI-SEMITISM"

With the recent appearance of the *Schwarze Hefte*, personal notebooks that run from the early 1930's to 1948, Heidegger's "anti-Semitism" has once again become an issue. There are, indeed, references to "world Jewry" and the shibboleth of the conspiracy of Jewish bankers. There is reference also to "the stubborn cleverness of calculation and making a profit, and their mix, based on the worldlessness (*Weltlosigkeit*) of Judaism" (cf. GA 95:97). They are invariably immigrants, since they lack a (Jewish) state (*Bodenlosigkeit*) — that is why they are, presumably, "worldless." Now whether remarks about Jews being good at business ("*Rechenfähigkeit*"), or about their not having a country ("*Weltlosigkeit des Judentums*"), or how they became the small international cabal of Jewish bankers in Europe because of a papal decree against usury in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, that they live in big cities, etc.,<sup>29</sup> or that Jews provided the "property" (*Eigentümliche*) for the top criminal of the modern age<sup>30</sup> — whether such remarks constitute anti-Semitism, I don't know. Peter Trawny, their editor, describes the "anti-Semitic" passages as "being-historical anti-Semitism."<sup>31</sup>

Holger Zaborowski, after discussing the issue, concludes that on the personal level Heidegger was not anti-Semitic — he got along well with his Jewish students and colleagues — though comments and remarks indicate a "kulturelle Antijudaismus" that he shared with the Germans of his time.<sup>32</sup>

And it had been embedded in the intellectual culture for a long time. As Hannah Arendt noted, according to the Enlightenment view there was really no place for Judaism.<sup>33</sup> In his *Streit der Fakultäten* of 1798 (*Werke* VII, 52-53), Kant speaks of a "euthanasia of Jewishness" as a condition for their becoming fellow-citizens (p. 62). Fichte doubts that Jesus was even a Jew (p. 61). For Kant the only possibility was conversion, something they could not do as the chosen (separate) people, according to Hegel; hence, there was no place for them in Europe (p. 72). For Nietzsche the future for European Judaism was in a singular relation with Christianity, and Nietzsche was the enemy of Messianism of any sort (p. 92-93).

29. Peter TRAWNY, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Frankfurt a/M, Klostermann, 2014, p. 34-35.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 51. Willingly?

31. *Ibid.*, p. 31. Trawny goes on to say that to being-historical anti-Semitism does not imply that being-historical thinking is, as such, anti-Semitic (p. 101). He asks: does every brand of antisemitism lead to Auschwitz? His answer is in the negative (p. 12).

32. "War Heidegger ein Antisemit? Zu einer kontroversen Frage," in A. DENKER, H. ZABOROWSKI, ed., *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus II: Interpretationen*, Freiburg, München, Alber, 2009, p. 263.

33. Donatella DI CAESARE, *Heidegger, die Juden, die Shoah*, Frankfurt a/M, Klostermann, 2016, p. 55. Cf. Hans LIEBESCHÜTZ, *Das Judentum im deutschen Gesichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1967.

The extent and meaning of Heidegger's anti-Semitism — cultural, “metaphysical,” being-historical — is very much a disputed question. (His wife Elfride was, apparently, another story.<sup>34</sup>) At any rate, Heidegger unequivocally rejected the racial doctrines of the Nazi's. Indeed, criticisms of *Volk* and race “science” appear already in the *Basic Problems of Philosophy* (GA 45:53), and this in public lectures in the mid-30's. Such criticisms abound in the unpublished treatises, part III of the *Gesamtausgabe*.<sup>35</sup> In *Contributions*, as noted earlier, he refers to the Nazi “science” of race theory (GA 65:479), the notion of higher and lower races (GA 65:117), blood and race as the bearers of history, etc., as “utter rubbish” (GA 65:493). By the same token, in *Besinnung*, he speaks of the notion of the eternal *Volk* as a piece of thoughtless nonsense (GA 66:318). Also in *Contributions*, he contrasts the notion of the German *Volk* with that of a people grounded in *Da-sein* as the truth of Being (Seyn, GA 65:42-43). (Being, in English, is an older spelling of being ; as *Seyn*, in German, is an older spelling of *Sein*). Or later in the same work, and very much in keeping with the language and themes he explores there, he says that we truly become a people when our true self is grounded in *Da-sein* from out of, and as, the truth of Being (GA 65:67). In other words, if one is looking for a notion of people (*Volk*) it might best be founded, not on biology with its basis in some chauvinistic subjectivism, but by incorporation into *Da-sein*, with its basis in the truth of Being. As *Seyn* is different from *Sein*, so the hyphenated *Da-sein* (the being that is there in the event, *Ereignis*) is different from *Dasein*.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. POLITICAL VIEWS IN THE *BLACK NOTEBOOKS*

The four volumes of the *Black Notebooks* represent a sort of intellectual diary Heidegger kept between 1931 and 1948. At the outset, he says that they are an attempt at a simple naming, not in any way assertions or notes for some planned system. Still, the notebooks are filled with abundant echoes of the themes found in the Unpublished Treatises, for example the conflict between *Welt* (love) and *Erde* (mortality, GA 94:336).<sup>37</sup> The designation *Seyn* (Being) makes its early appearance (GA 94:168) : every potential (“Wirklichkeitsnähe”) is empty so long as it is not held at a distance from the nod of Being (GA 94:177).

34. According to Gertrud Heidegger, Heidegger's niece, his wife Elfride maintained an anti-Semitic outlook all her life (LW:28, Engl. tr.).

35. In *Contributions*, there is a piece of heavily sardonic irony. Heidegger argues that if Bolshevism is Jewish (Marx was a Jew), and if Christianity is Jewish, then Christianity is Bolshevik (GA 65:54). Aside from the bad logic here, drawing the Judaism-Bolshevism (the Nazi designation for Soviet communism) out of Marx, a “Jew,” communism as secularized Messianism, is more than problematic. After all, if capitalism is “Jewish” then why is Marx anti-capitalism ?

36. G.J. SEIDEL, “Heidegger's Last God and the Schelling Connection,” *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 55 (1999), p. 85-98.

37. It must be granted that the Heideggerian renderings of *Welt* and *Erde* as love and death are odd in the extreme. He sees *Da-sein* as bestriding the conflict between the two. The interpretation is found in *Das Ereignis*, where Heidegger speaks of the truth come out of hiding as history, since the light (*Lichtung*) of Being fills “world”-history, thus first bringing about the separation of love (*Welt*) and mortality (*Erde*, GA 71:19). These meanings for *Welt* and *Erde* are also found earlier in *Contributions* (GA 65:399).

In the *Black Notebooks* the personal and private Heidegger is on display, the warts and pimples of his biases and prejudices, and profuse commentary on the events of the day and those in his own private and public life at the time. There is an initial enthusiasm expressed for National Socialism — “Der Führer has awakened a new reality” (GA 94:111), National Socialism taking up a wholly new and unheard of spiritual mission (GA 94:141). Though very soon, as is clear in the jottings from the rectorship period and thereafter (GA 94:111-168), he is no longer such an enthusiastic follower. Indeed, some ten years later he continues his examination of conscience regarding the rectorship : “My error in 1933 was not political. I erred regarding the essential relation between science and thinking” (GA 97:274). I was wrong, he says, to confuse the sciences with thoughts. This is where I went wrong in 1933, to be silent about other errors (GA 97:389). Or, as he later notes, the real mistake of the 1933 rectorship was not that Hitler was not known for what he was, but the vain hope that he would wake up the German people to their destiny — which didn’t happen. What did happen was being awakened from life in a concentration camp to collective guilt for the gas chamber horrors (GA 97:98-100).

And then there are the opinions. He speaks of the absurdity of the philosophy of existence, one hair better than life-philosophy (GA 94:19). Existentialism, for example, never really gets down to the being-question, namely what is to be gained by asking after (*Erfragen*) the truth of Being (GA 96:213). And Kierkegaard ? The question asked in *Being and Time* is wholly foreign to him, as it is to Christianity, theology, and metaphysics (GA 96:215-216). Heidegger characterizes “dialectical theology” (those following Barth’s commentary on Romans) as Protestant Jesuitism of the worst observance (GA 94:51).

In addition to his comments on Judaism there are other “isms” that come in for special treatment : among them Jesuitismus (“un-nordish” and completely unGerman (GA 94:326) ; the Jesuit motto *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* is but camouflage for will to power (GA 96:233) ; Americanismus (nihilism at its highest pitch, GA 96:225), like Judaism characterized by rootlessness (GA 96:258), lacking a real history (GA 96:266), and fixated on its comfortable standard of living (GA 96:269). Pragmatism ? An enlargement of rationalism, Being-historical cluelessness (GA 96:39-40). There is also Bolschewismus, and eventually Nationalsozialismus (the *spiritually* dubious National Socialist “Weltanschauung” that struts about in a form that it can never be, GA 94:149, 152). The highly questionable National Socialist philosophy is neither philosophy nor does it serve National Socialism. To speak of a philosophy as being National Socialistic is like saying that a triangle is courageous (GA 94:348). “National Socialist philosophy” is even more impossible and utterly superfluous than is a “Catholic philosophy” (GA 94:509). “Is it an accident that Nationalsozialismus has eliminated ‘Soziologie’ as a name ? Why,” he asks sardonically, “should sociology carry on with a preference for Jews and Catholics ?” (GA 95:161). The Roman Church’s Curialismus and the business of the salvation of souls (GA 96:136-137) also comes under the axe. Regarding the pact between Hitler and the pope he remarks that the idea of the Concordat of 1933 between the Vatican and the German state was to get the priests out of politics. It didn’t work ; it just made them become better or-

ganized and more devious (GA 94:117-118, also 186). There is a criticism of the church's adoption of Aquinas as patron of the defense of the faith against an "enemy" that occupies the same ground that it does (GA 94:401).

Among the other sundry "isms" he excoriates there is also Wagnerism, *Kunst* as religion for its devotees with a Christian/pagan cathedral [Bayreuth] for its organized cult, culture as cultural politics under the brow of Richard Wagner (GA 96:108-112). "Lohengrin," over and over again, which is the same "art" as the *technē* of tanks and air squadrons (GA 96:132-133).

He expresses numerous complaints and laments both personal and societal as well. There is an entry from 28. IV. 1934, about the time of his resignation as rector : a wasted year ; what remains : mediocrity and noise (GA 94:160-162). He says that his Rectoral Speech in 1933, upholding science in the university was likely an error, like trying to talk about colors to the blind (GA 97:258). And there are the enemies of thought : Christian believers and churchman who think they know it all ; politicians who slavishly follow the views of their constituents ; the barbarians of the "new world," the most dangerous being those that bring and spread the "refined" ideas in the market-place (GA 97:599). One who just reads the daily newspaper, but is otherwise thought-less, so long as that thinking forgets to think Beinge-wise, can get the "political" all screwed up (*verkennen*, GA 97:131, *Vor-stellen*). Such persons flee meditation (*Besinnung*) like the plague (GA 97:474). Thinking (*Denken*), he says, pushes for belief in Jesus Christ (GA 97:474). In an age when a boxer [Max Schmeling] is accounted a great man, what place is there for "metaphysics" ? (GA 94:183). He laments that the technical institutes have long since taken over the universities (GA 95:124). He admits that between 1930 and 1934 he believed that with National Socialism the transition to another beginning was possible, and that the university was the place where an-other beginning of the Beinge-historical might be readied. It was a phantom, an illusory deception, a deceptive illusion (GA 95:408-409).

And again, there is Judaism. The current rise in the power of Jewry — this is in the notebooks beginning in 1939 — has its basis in Western metaphysics, at once in the latest version, a vacuous rationality and the ability to do sums (*Rechenfähigkeit*), creating an employment of "Spirit" without in any way being able to grasp the hidden domains of decision involved. The "race" remains unequal to such issues. Husserl too (GA 96:46). The Jews "live" by their vaunted gift at business for a long time already according to the principle of race, as a defense. Setting this in place does not stem from "life" but from the mastery of life through *Machenschaft* (GA 96:56). All thinking in terms of race derives from present-day subjectivism, along with the empowering of machination (GA 96:60). "Machination," the mix of science and technology, power and control, can be seen as the "latest version" of Western metaphysics. *Machenschaft* is the purposively planned system (*plannend-einrichtenden Berechnung*, GA 96:132). Only romantics thought that the First World War would wake people up. As a classic example of unfettered *Machenschaft* it obvious did not (GA 96:113). Nationalsozialismus and Bolschewismus also represent the machinacious victory of *Machenschaft* (GA 96:127), likewise the Second World War (GA 96:173). Among the "isms" there is also Planetarismus (globalization ?), which is *Machen-*

*schaft* gone global, on the road to catastrophe and a world-wide self-sameness (GA 96:260-261).

In an extremely confusing passage Heidegger speaks of imperialism/despotism as both serving "international Jewry" and Western revolutions (the English, the American and the French, GA 96:131-133). There is an even more curious passage from 1941, if I am reading § 9 correctly, regarding *Weltjudentum*, goaded to emigrate, leaving the task of fighting to good German blood (GA 96:262). Speaking of despotism, and without any explanation or justification offered on his part, Heidegger states in 1948 that the modern system of the totalitarian dictator comes out of Judeo-Christian monotheism (GA 97:438). There are times when, with the editor of the notebooks, one may wonder: "Did Heidegger really know what was in the *Black Notebooks*?"<sup>38</sup> Americanismus and Bolschewismus and world Jewry play themselves out together. World Jewry is not a racial issue, but a metaphysical question, about the kind of humanity that is simply rootless (GA 96:143). The Anglo-American "world" (later termed "Superamericanization," GA 96:275) and Bolschewismus are, viewed metaphysically, inwardly the same: the unfettered unfolding of subjectivity in its pure *rationality* (GA 96:235). Since the Americans are largely Europeans it is a question of Europe destroying itself. "Hitler" is only the pretext (GA 97:230). Though he says that the German people were ruined as much by the criminally insane Hitler as by the advancing troops of the foreigners (GA 97:444).

Regarding the Russians and the Germans, the Russians understand the Germans, he says; the Germans understand of Russia only what is of European origin (Marxism). So it's the West against the West (GA 96:276). Though later he remarks that one thing National Socialism got right was its reaction to (Russian) communism and its essence: "imperialistic materialism" (GA 97:126-127). He remarks enigmatically on the Soviet foreign minister Molotov's visit to Berlin in November of 1940: the hidden history veils over its other beginning (GA 96:198). At one point he evokes the end-times: the Anti-Christ must arise from the same source as that with which it would be against: Judaism. "Judaism in a metaphysical sense — 'Volk' taken biologically — fighting against the Jews is the ultimate in self-annihilation." Again, if the essentially "Jewish" fights against the Jewish then the ultimate in self-annihilation in history is attained, granted that everywhere such domination is ripped apart, so that a battle "of the Jews" should first and foremost lead to domination (GA 97:20).

## V. WHAT THE *BLACK NOTEBOOKS* CONTAIN

At this point, the reader may well conclude that if this is all there is to the *Black Notebooks*, then they are hardly worth the effort to study them. Admittedly, the personal and sometimes intemperate opinions Heidegger gives voice to in the notebooks do, indeed, run the gamut from the curious to the bizarre. However, it must be noted that the sundry biases and prejudices expressed by Heidegger represent only a small portion of the content of these volumes. There is much else of significance here, a

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38. Peter TRAWNY, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschönerung*, p. 102.

great deal of it relating to material discussed in the unpublished treatises, above all regarding the event and its meaning for humanity and for philosophy.

There are also important hints regarding what is going on not only in his personal life but also intellectually. For example, he insists that he had thought the “ontological difference,” central to his philosophy, already in 1932 (GA 94:96). At one point he poignantly reflects on his mother, saying “my memory of this pious woman who without bitterness bore the way of her *seemingly* [italics his] God-forsaking son with insightful foresight” (GA 94:320). But above all, there is what is said about *Ereignis*, the event and its meaning. The new spelling for being (*Seyn*, Beinge) may have first appeared in the notebooks (GA 94:168). He speaks of the grounding of the ground of Beinge in the Beinge of the ground (the event), all this as the earthing of Da-sein in the enfolding (*Begriff*, GA 94:222). The earthing (*Gründung*) as Da-sein, this is but the standing-in in the event (GA 94:271). The innermost law of Beinge : it can effect things only once, and give rise, again, only once to what is unique (GA 94:276). The event, he says, is more original and more inceptual than any “religion” ; the happening of the truth of Beinge as the wholly different uplifting of the human and the opening for a different sort of transcendence (*Abgründigkeit*, GA 94:357 ; cf. the excellent summary regarding the meaning of the event on p. 382).

He speaks of the trembling (*Erzitterung*) of Beinge in the setting-aside (*Verweigerung*) of Beinge of the “Goddling” (*Götterns*) of the Last God, the trembling as the holding-open of the time-play-space of the Da for Da-sein (GA 94:429). The theme of quiet stillness is sounded often in the unpublished writings, as here in the notebooks. There is the experiencing of the most quiet thing, the coming out of the “there” in the event : the showing up of Beinge out of itself (GA 94:505). Or as he notes, repeating the theme of the thrown-thrower, the impetus for the leap is from Beinge itself alone, and it reveals itself as the leaper (GA 95:143). To take Beinge at (*beim*) its word is to bespeak itself as Word, which speaking, as Da-sein, is the showing up, the revelation of the truth of Beinge. Though in the Word, as Word, is Beinge unsayable, as it involves the setting-aside (GA 95:308, the *Verweigerung*) of its own being. What you get in questioning (*Er-fragen*) the truth of Being, you get an answer much more than you bargained for (*überantwortet*), since it comes from Beinge itself, since it also involves the transformation of the human, the transformation of the one doing the questioning (GA 96:96, 98).

What is it, Heidegger asks, to take one’s stand with *Beinge* ? It is standing-in the mind-set (*Besinnung*) of the truth, through which showing-up of Beinge is grounded in an ad-vent (*zu-kunft*, GA 96:100). There is the encounter between the divine and the human along with the conflict between love (*Welt*) and mortality (*Erde*) in what shows up (GA 96:106). The relation to Beinge, the encounter with the divine is possible only in virtue of the cherishing (*Brauchen*, love) of Beinge, which eventful eventing (*Er-eignung*) in Da-sein is found in the showing up of the truth of Beinge (GA 96:123). (Heidegger here takes an older etymological meaning of *brauchen* as *schonen*, take care of, look after, GA 73:705.) As he says, “Everything worthy of questioning rests upon what is worthy of thought. This is the unique that came before and is to come (*das Einstige*) : the event.” (GA 97:36). The truly historical (*Ge-*

*schichte*) is the sending (*Schicken*) of what is to come in the happening of the event. Sending is what is sent forth (into the being of the human, GA 97:47-48).

There is even something in the nature of a profession of faith on the philosopher's part: "*No power of the world and no God will ever tear my thinking away from belonging to Beinge itself*" (GA 97:63; the italics are his). And another personal note: when the rats leave the sinking ship on the sea of Beinge, that's thinking, sinking it belongs to its element (Beinge); thinking sticks with the ship it trusts in and goes down with it (GA 97:112). The there-*beinge* as Beinge is the worlding of the world, occurring in virtue of the freedom (*Freyheit*, a special sort of freedom) of the event released (*freyent seint*) as the being of the event, as the Beinge that happens in the There (GA 97:68). The event of this freedom (*Freyheit*) is divesting (*Ent-zug*) so as to don a new set of clothes (*An-ziehung*, GA 97:119). In the dis-owning of itself in loving mercy, this releasement (*Gelassenheit*) occurs in the forgetfulness of its mystery (*Ratsal*, GA 97:328).

A question that is asked repeatedly throughout the volumes of the *Black Notebooks* is: Who (Where, What) are we? The question will eventually devolve down to the classical meaning of the human being as rational animal, but Heidegger seeks to take the issue significantly deeper. For example, sometime after 1936 (about the time of the *Beiträge*) he asks: "Where do we stand? On the brink of despair? Yes — but still here and here alone there arises this situation for a moment, the full light of the shining light of Beinge in which the Last God hides himself" (GA 94:316). The "we" in "Who are we?" is not simply the German people but humanity as such. As he says, one never actually understands what the Word says, where one in-authentically means a being or awaits something re-presentable, instead of completing a leap into the standing-in of Da-sein (GA 96:82). On the other hand, he argues that to the extent that Christendom adopted the philosophical anthropology of the animal rationale it thereby functioned as paganism (GA 94:476).

In the notebooks there is the theme of the brutality of being. Indeed, in the 40's this is the way he eventually dubs the Nazi regime ("stumpfen Brutalität des 'Dritten Reich'", GA 97:82). He sees this brutality as the reflection of the animality of the animal rationale, the predator as hero, the principle of race as basic truth (GA 95:494-497); which also accords with the *Machenschaft* in being (GA 95:402). With the ontological difference a new and different view of the human and a people is implied, with the echo of Beinge (GA 95:81-83). From the heretofore view of the human being as an animal rationale in the form of a subject there needs to be an emendation of the human being in the direction of Da-sein (GA 95:105). The earliest humans needed to speak of the truth of being right off; the moderns could speak about the correctness-representing humans; the future ones must learn to think through to (*erdenken*) Beinge. The "school" for learning this is Da-sein (GA 95:134). "There is a freeing from the control (*Machenschaft*) of beings through the transformation of the human into Da-sein." The standing-in-between of this Da summons a new species, for which species Beinge is itself care ("dem *das Seyn die Sorge* ist," GA 95:240). The "other beginning" represents a change in the philosophical view of the human being (GA 95:422).



In other words, emerging from the *Black Notebooks*, as from the unpublished treatises generally, even amidst the darkness and the ugliness of the times, there is sounded a theme of hope.

Throughout the *Black Notebooks* Heidegger is concerned to counter the notion of the human being as rational animal. As he says, “So long as the human being considers his essence in the sense of rational animal, so long as he everywhere thinks ‘metaphysically,’ in the fashion of the distinction between the visible and the invisible ; with such thinking he will persist in flight before the question regarding the truth of Being,” unaware of the domain in which the showing up, the setting-aside (*Verweigerung*) “of” Being that is the event, occurs (GA 96:4). As Heidegger states in the late 30’s, the basic question of my philosophy is not “What is man ?” but, rather, what is the truth of *Being* as the Being of truth, the earthing (*Gründung*) of the truth in its showing-up, in its revelation (GA 96:137).

Again, there is hope. But there is hope only if the hitherto prevalent notion of the human being as rational animal is transposed into a new and different key, that of *Da-sein*.