

PART ONE

TEXTS BY MARTIN HEIDEGGER

INTRODUCTION

In the dossier that follows, we present texts that offer crucial insight into the motivations underlying Heidegger's partisanship for National Socialism in the 1930s.

At the same time, there is little that is "self-evident" about the materials contained in the ensuing documentation. Both Heidegger's detractors and apologists err in disseminating simplifying verdicts which tend to suppress the profound complexities of the all-important relationship between politics and philosophy in Heidegger's work. And thus, while Heidegger was far from being a "Nazi philosopher" (as some have recently claimed), neither can one make a neat and total separation between his philosophical and political beliefs. Only when one fully appreciates the intellectual complexities of Heidegger's political commitment—that is, the fact that his was by no means a National Socialism of the "rank and file" variety, but a highly "spiritualized" conception of the movement (the best account of this dimension of Heidegger's work remains Jacques Derrida's *Of Spirit*)—can one begin to do justice to the peculiar intricacies of Heidegger's case. Thus, in order to "judge"—or, better still, to "understand"—the bases of Heidegger's political involvements, it is essential to take into consideration the key philosophical works of the period, from *Being and Time* (1927) to *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935).

Of course, Heidegger's engagement for National Socialism was overdetermined circumstantially as well as philosophically. That a philosopher of his acumen and brilliance was so readily seduced by the Hitler-euphoria that swept Germany in the early 1930s should serve as a cautionary tale about the uncritical veneration of intellectual genius. It seems, moreover, to offer an excellent illustration of Kant's point, in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, about a "good will" as the only capacity worth having for its own sake, since other intellectual talents and competences can always be perverted in the direction of ignoble ends.

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And yet to claim that it was an intellectually “spiritualized” conception of National Socialism to which Heidegger swore allegiance cannot help but raise an entire series of troublesome hermeneutical questions about the elective affinities that Heidegger indeed perceived between the doctrines of fundamental ontology and German fascism. For as we see clearly in the political texts that follow—above all, in the 1933 Rectoral Address as well as in the political addresses from the same period—Heidegger’s appeals in support of the “movement” strike a peculiar balance between the *Sturm und Kampf* idiom of National Socialism and the existential analytic of *Being and Time*. The virtues of the movement are enthusiastically portrayed via the discourse of “authentic decision” that is readily identifiable to all those familiar with Heidegger’s 1927 magnum opus. Thus, as Karl Löwith convincingly demonstrates in his excellent essay on “The Political Implications of Heidegger’s Existentialism,” terms such as “Being-towards-death,” “destiny,” “authentic choice of oneself,” and so forth, figure quite prominently in virtually all of Heidegger’s political addresses of the period. In no uncertain terms, it seems that Heidegger himself viewed his Nazi engagement of the early 1930s as a type of authentic, “ontic” realization of the “Existentials” of *Being and Time*. Facts such as these cannot but lead one to conclude that *Being and Time*, in addition to being a pathbreaking work in existential phenomenology, is much more thoroughly rooted in the concerns and dilemmas of its age than may at first appear. That is, it is not only a work of *prima philosophia*, but is itself saturated with historicity. To do justice to Heidegger as a thinker, then, means to open oneself to both the historical as well as the intra-philosophical bases of his thought.

Chapters 3 and 5 reproduce two of the apologiae set forth by Heidegger over the years. In the debate that has been spawned in the aftermath of Victor Farias’ book, *Heidegger and National Socialism*, the philosopher’s attempts at self-exculpation have been viewed with increased skepticism.

First, Heidegger’s account of the circumstances surrounding his accession to the rectorship in May 1933 have been vigorously contested by the historian Hugo Ott.¹ Though Heidegger has tried to portray himself as a champion of moderation, who, by virtue of his international renown, alone could forestall the rampant politicization of university life, the facts of the case are at odds with this characterization. Instead, we

now know that Heidegger was quite active in the promulgation of *Gleichschaltung* legislation, which entailed the transformation of university life in line with the Nazi *Führerprinzip* or leadership principle. Since Heidegger thought of himself as a leader—indeed, according to the pro-rector, Joseph Sauer, as the greatest philosopher since Heraclitus—this move, which ended a longstanding tradition of university self-government, seemed quite natural for him. Further, he recommended that appointments be based on “political criteria” and was not averse to denouncing to Nazi higher-ups faculty members who could not be trusted to toe the new line. And thus, during his rectorship, the Baden university system was widely perceived as a “model instance” of National Socialist educational reform.

Heidegger insists that he opposed the propagation of anti-Jewish sentiment (such as the hanging of “Juden nicht erwünscht!” posters) during his tenure as rector. Yet a prerequisite for taking office was the enforcement of the anti-Jewish decrees of April 1, 1933 (the so-called “Law for the Reconstitution of the Civil Service”), as a result of which Jews were summarily dismissed from university positions. Moreover, during his rectorship, Heidegger refused to accept any Jewish dissertation students. He is alleged to have callously dashed the hopes of one of his own highly regarded Jewish doctoral candidates, who was on the verge of attaining her degree, with the words: “You understand, Frau Mintz, that because you are a Jew I cannot supervise your promotion.”²

Finally, we have included one of Heidegger’s key philosophical writings from the 1930s and 1940s, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” a text that is indispensable for understanding the so-called “turn” in his thinking from “existential ontology” to the “history of Being.” Written in note form, and contemporaneous with the 1936–1941 Nietzsche lectures, these theses offer privileged insight into Heidegger’s ontological-historical (*seinsegeschichtlich*) understanding of the contemporary European crisis—“the unconditional objectification of everything present,” “the collapse of the world,” “the desolation of the earth”—which Heidegger views as a direct result of the “consummation [*Vollendung*] of metaphysics”; that is, the consummation of the project of the metaphysical domination of the earth, as foreshadowed by the philosophical “will to will” (e.g., in Descartes and Nietzsche) and as prophesied by Ernst Jünger’s theory of planetary technology, which Heidegger finds so instructive.

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But here one also finds clear traces of the philosopher's disillusionment with historically existing National Socialism, as it became increasingly clear to him that the movement had abandoned its putative metaphysical promise in favor of other ideologies and political goals. Thus, in thesis XXVI, for example, we find a pointed critique of the leadership principle and of actual leaders, who have been reduced to mere pawns and executors of a fate—a *Seinsgeschick*—that has been mysteriously preordained by Being itself.

But at the same time, one cannot help but raise doubts concerning the diagnostic capacities of the ontological-historical standpoint adopted by Heidegger (that of *Seinsgeschichte* or the history of Being) when it comes to proffering judgments about the immanent trajectory of contemporary historical life. Thus, for example, when Heidegger, also in thesis XXVI, attempts to account for the century's two world wars in terms of our purported "abandonment by Being" ("*Seinsverlassenheit*"), the palpable weaknesses of the "history of Being" as an explanatory device seem self-evident.

Notes

1. See Hugo Ott, "Wie Heidegger Rektor wurde," in *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1988), pp. 138–145.
2. Leopoldine Weizmann, "Heidegger, était-il Nazi?" *Etudes* 368(5):638, 1988.

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Assuming the rectorship means committing oneself to leading this university *spiritually and intellectually*. The teachers and students who constitute the rector's following [*Gefolgschaft der Lehrer und Schüler*] will awaken and gain strength only through being truly and collectively rooted in the essence of the German university. This essence will attain clarity, rank, and power, however, only when the leaders are, first and foremost and at all times, themselves led by the inexorability of that spiritual mission which impresses onto the fate of the German Volk the stamp of their history.

Do we know of this spiritual mission? Whether yes or no, the question remains unavoidable: are we, the teachers and students of this "high" school, truly and collectively rooted in the essence of the German university? Does this essence truly have the power to shape our existence? It does, but only if we *will* this essence fully. But who would wish to doubt that? The predominant, essential character of the university is generally considered to reside in its "self-governance"; this shall be preserved. But have we also fully considered what this claim to the right of self-governance demands of us?

Self-governance means: to set ourselves the task and to determine ourselves the way and means of realizing that task in order to be what we ourselves ought to be. But do we know *who we ourselves are*, this body of teachers and students at the highest school of the German Volk? *Can* we know that at all, without the most constant and most uncompromising and harshest *self-examination* [*Selbstbesinnung*]?

Neither knowledge of the conditions that prevail today at the university nor familiarity with its earlier history guarantees sufficient knowl-

"The Self-Assertion of the German University" ("Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität") by Martin Heidegger first appeared in 1933 with Korn Verlag in Breslau. It was republished in 1983 by Klostermann Verlag in Frankfurt.

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edge of the essence of the university unless we first delimit, clearly and uncompromisingly, this essence for the future; in such self-limitation, *will* it; and, in this willing, *assert* ourselves.

Self-governance can exist only on the basis of self-examination. Self-examination, however, can only take place on the strength of the *self-assertion* of the German university. Will we carry this out, and how?

The self-assertion of the German university is the original, common will to its essence. We regard the German university as the “high” school which from science [*Wissenschaft*]* and through science, educates and disciplines the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German Volk. The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as the will to the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk as a Volk that knows itself in its state. Science and German fate must come to power at *the same time* in the will to essence. And they will do this then and *only* then when we—the teachers and students—expose science to its innermost necessity, *on the one hand*, and, *on the other*, when we stand firm in the face of German fate extreme in its extreme distress [*Not*].

We will, to be sure, not experience the essence of science in its innermost necessity as long as we simply—talking about the “new concept of science”—provide for the independence and freedom from presuppositions of a science that is all too contemporary. This activity, which is simply negating and scarcely looks back beyond the last decades, has virtually taken on the appearance of a true effort to understand the essence of science.

If we wish to grasp the essence of science, then we must first ask ourselves the decisive question: should science still continue to *exist* for us in the future, or ought we to let it drift off to a quick end? That

* Translator’s note: Though the German “*Wissenschaft*” is frequently translated as “science,” it is slightly misleading in the context at hand to so render it. For Heidegger’s employment of the word harks back to the “authentic” German philosophical meaning of the word as “true knowing,” as is suggested by Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, Hegel’s *Wissenschaft der Logik*, as well as Husserl’s “*Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*.” Thus, the word not only has nothing to do with what we in English refer to as the “natural sciences.” Heidegger’s reliance on “*Wissenschaft*”—a central motif in his important texts from 1929 to 1935—also strives to differentiate rigorous philosophical thought, in which the *Seinsfrage* occupies its rightful pride of place, from the “inferior” versions of *Wissenschaft* that were prominent in his day, such as neo-Kantianism, positivism, empiricism, and so forth.

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science should exist at all has never been unconditionally necessary. But if science should exist, and should exist *for* us and *through* us, then under what conditions can it truly exist?

Only when we submit to the power of the *beginning* of our spiritual-historical existence. This beginning is the beginning [*Aufbruch*] of Greek philosophy. That is when, from the culture of one Volk and by the power of that Volk's language, Western man rises up for the first time against *the totality of what is* and questions it and comprehends it as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows it and wills it or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy and draws from it the strength of its essence, assuming that it still remains at all equal to this beginning.

Here we want to recover for *our* existence two distinguishing characteristics of the original Greek essence of science.

Among the Greeks there circulated an old report that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. It is this Prometheus into whose mouth Aeschylus puts an adage that expresses the essence of knowledge:

technē d'anangkes asthenestera makro

"But knowledge is far less powerful than necessity." That means: all knowledge of things remains beforehand at the mercy of overpowering fate and fails before it.

It is precisely for that reason that knowledge must develop its highest defiance, for which alone the entire might of the concealedness of what is will first rise up, in order really to fail. Thus what is reveals itself in its unfathomable inalterability and confers its truth on knowledge. This adage about the creative impotence of knowledge is a saying of the Greeks, in whom we all too easily see the model for knowledge that is purely self-reliant and thus lost to the world; this knowledge is presented to us as the "theoretical" attitude. But what is *theoria* for the Greeks? It is said that it is pure contemplation, which remains bound only to its object in its fullness and in its demands. The Greeks are invoked to support the claim that this contemplative behavior is supposed to occur for its own sake. But this claim is incorrect. For, on the one hand, "theory" does not happen for its own sake; it happens only as a result of the passion to remain close to what is as such and to be beset by it. On the other hand, however, the Greeks struggled to understand and

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carry out this contemplative questioning as a—indeed as *the*—highest mode of man's *energeia*, of man's "being at work." It was not their wish to bring practice into line with theory, but the other way around: to understand theory as the supreme realization of genuine practice. For the Greeks science is not a "cultural treasure," but the innermost determining center of their entire existence as a Volk and a state. Science is also not merely the means of making the unconscious conscious, but the force that keeps all of existence in focus and embraces it.

{ Science is the questioning standing firm in the midst of the totality of being as it continually conceals itself. This active perseverance knows of its impotence in the face of Fate. }

That is the essence of science in its beginning. But have not two and a half millennia passed since this beginning? Has the progress that has occurred in human activity not changed science as well? Certainly! The Christian-theological interpretation of the world that followed, as well as the later mathematical-technical thinking of the modern age, have removed science from its beginnings both in time and in its objects [*zeitlich und sachlich*]. But that has by no means relegated the beginning itself to the past, let alone destroyed it. For, assuming that the original Greek science is something great, then the *beginning* of this great thing remains its *greatest* moment. The essence of science could not even be emptied and used up [*vernutzt*]—which it is today, all results and "international organizations" notwithstanding—if the greatness of the beginning did not *still* exist. The beginning *exists* still. It does not lie *behind* us as something long past, but it stands *before* us. The beginning has—as the greatest moment, which exists in advance—already passed indifferently over and beyond all that is to come and hence over and beyond us as well. The beginning has invaded our future; it stands there as the distant decree that orders us to recapture its greatness.

Only if we resolutely obey this decree to win back the greatness of the beginning, only then will science become the innermost necessity of our existence. Otherwise, science will remain something in which we become involved purely by chance or will remain a calm, pleasurable activity, an activity free of danger, which promotes the mere advancement of knowledge [*Kenntnisse*].

{ If, however, we obey the distant decree of the beginning, then science

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must become the fundamental event of our spiritual existence as a Volk [*geistig-volklichen Daseins*].

And if our ownmost existence itself stands on the threshold of a great transformation; if it is true what the last German philosopher to passionately seek God, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: "God is dead"; if we must take seriously the abandonment of man today in the midst of Being, what then does this imply for science?

Then the Greeks' perseverance in the face of what is, a stance that was initially one of wonder and admiration, will be transformed into being completely exposed to and at the mercy of what is concealed and uncertain, that is, what is worthy of question. Questioning will then no longer be simply the preliminary stage to the answer as knowledge, a stage that we can put behind us, but questioning will itself become the highest form of knowledge. Questioning will then unfold its ownmost power for disclosing the essence of all things. Then questioning will compel us to simplify our gaze to the extreme in order to focus on what is inescapable.

Such questioning will shatter the encapsulation of the various fields of knowledge into separate disciplines; it will return them from the isolated fields and corners into which they have been scattered, without bounds and goals; and it will ground science once again directly in the fruitfulness and blessing of all the world-shaping forces of man's historical existence, such as: nature, history, language; the Volk, custom, the state; poetry, thought, belief; sickness, madness, death; law, economy, technology.

(If we will the essence of science in the sense of the questioning, unsheltered standing firm in the midst of the uncertainty of the totality of being, then this will to essence will create for our Volk a world of the innermost and most extreme danger, i.e., a truly spiritual world. For "spirit" is neither empty acumen nor the noncommittal play of wit nor the busy practice of never-ending rational analysis nor even world reason; rather, spirit is the determined resolve to the essence of Being, a resolve that is attuned to origins and knowing. And the spiritual world of a Volk is not its cultural superstructure, just as little as it is its arsenal of useful knowledge [*Kenntnisse*] and values; rather, it is the power that comes from preserving at the most profound level the forces that are

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rooted in the soil and blood of a Volk, the power to arouse most inwardly and to shake most extensively the Volk's existence. A spiritual world alone will guarantee our Volk greatness. For it will make the constant decision between the will to greatness and the toleration of decline the law that establishes the pace for the march upon which our Volk has embarked on the way to its future history.

[If we will *this* essence of science, then the teachers of the university must really advance to the outermost positions where they will be exposed to the danger of the world's constant uncertainty.] If they stand firm there, i.e., if from there—in essential proximity to and beset by all things—there arises for them a common questioning and saying pervaded with a sense of community, then they will become strong enough to lead. For what is decisive in leading is not merely going ahead, but the strength to go alone, not out of obstinacy and the desire to dominate, but by virtue of the most profound destiny and the broadest obligations. Such strength binds to what is essential; it effects the selection of the best, and it awakens the genuine following [*Gefolgschaft*] of those who are of new courage [*neuen Mutes*]. But we do not need to first awaken such a following. The German students are on the march. And *whom* they are seeking, that is those leaders through whom they intend to elevate their own destiny to a grounded, knowing truth and to place it in the clarity of the interpreting-effective word and deed [*deutend-wirkenden Wortes und Werkes*].

Out of the resolve of the German students to stand firm in the face of the extreme distress of German fate comes a will to the essence of the university. This will is a true will, provided that the German students, through the new Student Law,* place themselves under the law of their essence and thereby delimit this essence for the very first time. To give law to oneself is the highest freedom. The much praised “academic freedom” is being banished from the German university; for this freedom was false, because it was only negating. It meant predominantly lack of concern, arbitrariness in one's intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint in everything one does.] The German student's notion of

*Translator's note: An example of *Gleichschaltung* legislation, the new Student Law of May 1, 1933 was intended to organize university students in accordance with the *Führerprinzip* in order thereby to ensure their integration within the National Socialist state.

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freedom is now being returned to its truth. Out of this freedom will develop for German students certain bonds and forms of service.

The first bond is the one that binds to the ethnic and national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*].* It entails the obligation to share fully, both passively and actively, in the toil, the striving, and the abilities of all estates and members of the Volk. This bond will henceforth be secured and rooted in student existence [*Dasein*] through *labor service*.

The second bond is the one that binds to the honor and the destiny of the nation in the midst of the other peoples of the world. It demands the readiness, secured in knowledge and ability and firmed up through discipline, to give one's utmost. This bond will in the future embrace and pervade all of student existence in the form of *military service*.

The third bond is the one that binds the students to the spiritual mission of the German Volk. This Volk is playing an active role in shaping its fate by placing its history into the openness of the overpowering might of all the world-shaping forces of human existence and by struggling ever anew to secure its spiritual world. Thus exposed to the extreme questionableness of its own existence, this Volk has the will to be a spiritual Volk. It demands of itself and for itself, and of its leaders and guardians, the hardest clarity that comes from the highest, broadest, and richest knowledge. Young students, who are venturing early into manhood and spreading their will over the destiny of the nation, are compelling themselves, thoroughly, to serve this knowledge. They will no longer permit *knowledge service* to be the dull, quick training for an "elegant" profession. Because the statesman and the teacher, the doctor and the judge, the pastor and the master builder lead the Volk in its existence as a Volk and a state and watch over this existence in its essential relations to the world-shaping forces of human Being and keep it focused, these professions and the education for them are entrusted to the knowledge service. Knowledge does not serve the professions, but the other way around: the professions realize and administer the Volk's highest and most essential knowledge, that of its entire existence. But for us this knowledge is not the calm taking note of essences and values in themselves; rather, it is the placing of one's existence in the most acute

*Translator's note: *Volksgemeinschaft* was the National Socialist expression for the "national community," that is, a new, organic, communal social order bereft of the divisions and antagonisms of modern "society."

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danger in the midst of overpowering Being. The questionableness of Being in general compels the Volk to work and struggle and forces it into its state, to which the professions belong.

The three bonds—*through* the Volk to the destiny of the state *in* its spiritual mission—are *equally original* aspects of the German essence. The three forms of service that follow from them—labor service, military service, and knowledge service—are equally necessary and of equal rank.

Knowledge of the Volk that is actively involved with the Volk, knowledge of the destiny of the state that holds itself in readiness; it is these that, together with the knowledge of the spiritual mission, first create the original and full essence of science, the realization of which has been given to us as our task—assuming that we obey what the beginning of our spiritual-historical existence decreed in the distant past.

It is *this* science that is meant when the essence of the German university is defined as the high school that, from science and through science, educates and disciplines the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German Volk.

This primordial concept of knowledge commits one not just to “objectivity,” but, first of all, to essential and simple questioning in the midst of the historical-spiritual world of the Volk. Indeed, it is only from here that objectivity can establish itself, i.e., find its character and limits.

Science in this sense must become the force that shapes the corporate body of the German university. This implies two things: first, the teachers and students must each in their own way be *seized* by the idea of science and *remain* seized by it. At the same time, however, this concept of science must penetrate into and transform the basic forms in which the teachers and students collectively pursue their respective scholarly activities: it must transform from within the *faculties* [*Fakultäten*] and the *disciplines* [*Fachschaften*].

The faculty will only be a faculty if it develops into a capacity for spiritual legislation, a capacity that is rooted in the essence of that faculty’s particular science, so that it can give shape to the forces of existence that beset *it* and fit them into the *one* spiritual world of the Volk.

The discipline will only be a discipline if it places itself from the very

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outset within the realm of this spiritual legislation, thereby bringing down disciplinary barriers and overcoming the musty and false character of higher education as superficial professional training.

At the moment when the faculties and disciplines get the essential and simple questions of their science underway, the teachers and students will already be in the embrace of the *same* ultimate necessities and afflictions attendant to existence as a Volk and a state.

Giving form to the original essence of science, however, demands such a degree of rigorousness, responsibility, and superior patience that by comparison, for example, the conscientious observance or the zealous modification of fixed ways of doing things hardly matters.

If, however, the Greeks needed three centuries just to put the *question* of what knowledge is on the proper footing and on the secure path, then *we* certainly cannot think that the elucidation and unfolding of the essence of the German university can occur in the present or coming semester.

But there is, to be sure, *one thing* that we do know which follows from the essence of science as indicated above, and that is that the German university can only then attain form and power when the three forms of service—labor service, military service, and knowledge service—come together primordially into *one* formative force. That is to say:

The teachers' will to essence must awaken to the simplicity and breadth of the knowledge of the essence of science and grow strong. The students' will to essence must force itself into the highest clarity and discipline of knowledge and must shape, through its demands and determinations, the engaged knowledge of the Volk and its state and incorporate this knowledge into the essence of science. Both wills must ready themselves for mutual struggle. All capacities of will and thought, all strengths of the heart, and all capabilities of the body must be developed *through* struggle, must be intensified *in* struggle, and must remain preserved *as* struggle.

We choose the knowing struggle of those who question, and declare with Carl von Clausewitz: "I renounce the foolish hope in salvation by the hand of chance."

The community of teachers and students in struggle will, however, transform the German university into the site of spiritual legislation and

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realize in it a concentrated center [*die Mitte der straffsten Sammlung*] for the highest service to the Volk in its state only if the teachers and students arrange their existence to be simpler, tougher, and more modest in its needs than that of all other *Volksgenossen*.^{*} All leadership must allow following to have its own strength. In each instance, however, to follow carries resistance within it. This essential opposition between leading and following must neither be covered over nor, indeed, obliterated altogether.

Struggle alone will keep this opposition open and implant within the entire body of teachers and students that fundamental mood out of which self-limiting self-assertion will empower resolute self-examination to true self-governance.

Do we will the essence of the German university, or do we not will it? It is up to us whether and how extensively we endeavor, wholeheartedly and not just casually, to bring about self-examination and self-assertion; or whether we—with the best intentions—merely alter the old arrangements and add some new ones. No one will prevent us from doing this.

But neither will anyone ask us whether we will it or do not will it when the spiritual strength of the West fails and the West starts to come apart at the seams, when this moribund pseudocivilization collapses into itself, pulling all forces into confusion and allowing them to suffocate in madness.

Whether such a thing occurs or does not occur, this depends solely on whether we as a historical-spiritual Volk will ourselves, still and again, or whether we will ourselves no longer. Each individual *has a part* in deciding this, even if, and precisely if, he seeks to evade this decision.

But it is our will that our Volk fulfill its historical mission.

We will ourselves. For the young and youngest elements of the Volk, which are already reaching beyond us, *have already decided* this.

We can only fully understand the glory and greatness of this new beginning, however, if we carry within ourselves that deep and broad thoughtfulness upon which the ancient wisdom of the Greeks drew in uttering the words:

^{*} Translator's note: *Volksgenossen* was the National Socialist term for a "comrade" or fellow Nazi.

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ta . . . megala panta episphale .

“All that is great stands in the storm .

(Plato, *Republic*, 497d, 9)

*Translated by William S. Lewis**

*The translator would like to acknowledge the fact that he consulted with profit Karsten Harries' translation of “The Self-Assertion of the German University” in *The Review of Metaphysics* 38:467–481, 1985.

POLITICAL TEXTS, 1933–1934

Schlageter
(May 26, 1933)

In the midst of our work, during a short break in our lectures, let us remember the Freiburg student Albert Leo Schlageter,* a young German hero who a decade ago died the most difficult and the greatest death of all.

Let us honor him by reflecting, for a moment, upon his death in order that this death may help us to understand our lives.

Schlageter died the *most difficult* of all deaths. Not in the front line as the leader of his field artillery battery, not in the tumult of an attack, and not in a grim defensive action—no, he stood *defenseless* before the French rifles.

But he stood and bore the most difficult thing a man can bear.

Yet even this could have been borne with a final rush of jubilation, had a victory been won and the greatness of the awakening nation shone forth.

Instead—darkness, humiliation, and betrayal.

And so, in his most difficult hour, he had also to achieve *the greatest thing of which man is capable*. Alone, drawing on his own inner strength,

Heidegger's "Political Texts: 1933–1934" can be found in Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger* (Bern: Suhr, 1962).

* Albert Leo Schlageter, a former student at Freiburg University, was shot for acts of sabotage against the French occupation army in the Ruhr on May 26, 1923. Subsequently, he was elevated to the status of a Nazi martyr and hero.

he had to place before his soul an image of the future awakening of the Volk to honor and greatness so that he could die believing in this future.

Whence this *clarity of heart*, which allowed him to envision what was greatest and most remote?

When this *clarity of heart*, which allowed him to envision what was greatest and most remote?

Student of Freiburg! German student! When on your hikes and outings you set foot in the mountains, forests, and valleys of this Black Forest, the home of this hero, experience this and know: the mountains among which the young farmer's son grew up are of primitive stone, of granite. They have long been at work hardening the will.

The autumn sun of the Black Forest bathes the mountain ranges and forests in the most glorious clear light. It has long nourished clarity of the heart.

As he stood defenseless facing the rifles, the hero's inner gaze soared above the muzzles to the daylight and mountains of his home that he might die for the German people and its Reich with the Alemannic countryside before his eyes.

With a hard will and a clear heart, Albert Leo Schlageter died his death, the most difficult and the greatest of all.

Student of Freiburg, let the strength of this hero's native mountains flow into your will!

Student of Freiburg, let the strength of the autumn sun of this hero's native valley shine into your heart!

Preserve both within you and carry them, hardness of will and clarity of heart, to your comrades at the German universities.

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Schlageter walked these grounds as a student. But Freiburg could not hold him for long. He was compelled to go to the Baltic; he was compelled to go to Upper Silesia; he was compelled to go to the Ruhr.

He was not permitted to escape his destiny so that he could die the most difficult and greatest of all deaths with a hard will and a clear heart.

We honor the hero and raise our arms in silent greeting.

Labor Service and the University*

(June 20, 1933)

In the future, the *school* will no longer enjoy its exclusive position in education. With the *Labor Service*, there has arisen a new and decisive force for education [*Erziehungsmacht*]. The *work camp* is now taking its place alongside home, youth league, military service, and school.

A new institution for the direct revelation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* is being realized in the work camp. In the future, young Germans will be governed by the knowledge of *labor*, in which the Volk concentrates its strength in order to experience the hardness of its existence, to preserve the momentum of its will, and to learn anew the value of its manifold abilities. The work camp is at the same time a camp for training leaders in all social groups [*Stände*] and professions. For what counts in the camp is exemplary acting and working together, but not standing by and supervising. And least of all capable of grasping the new reality of the work camp are those who visit such a camp one time as "sightseers."

* Appeared in the *Freiburger Studentenzeitung*. This organ, in which many of Heidegger's political tracts and speeches from the early 1930s appeared, was published by the Freiburg Student Association, which had become the official Nazi student organization.

In his May 27, 1927 Rectoral Address, Heidegger refers to three types of "service" that should be rendered by students to the state: "labor service," "military service," and "service in knowledge." In order to understand the significance of Heidegger's repeated emphasis on the virtues of "labor service," it is important to realize that in the early stages of the Nazi regime, "labor camps" were deemed important vehicles of National Socialist indoctrination, in which the differences among various social classes would be leveled, resulting in the creation of a homogeneous and seamless *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community).

Not only does the work camp awaken and educate to the knowledge of the laboring community of all social groups [*die arbeitende Gemeinschaft aller Stände*], but in the future, this knowledge, rooted in the souls of young Germans, will also have a purifying effect on the school and will legislate what it can and cannot, and should and should not, do.

At the same time, the work camp is, as an educational institution in its own right, becoming a new source of those energies through which all other educational institutions—especially the school—are being forced to decide where they stand [*zur Entscheidung gezwungen*] and are being transformed.

Our university is surrounded in the immediate vicinity by work camps that are co-supervised by teachers from this school.

A new reality is present in the work camp. This reality serves as a symbol for the fact that our university is opening itself to the new force for education embodied in the Labor Service. Camp and school are resolved to bring together, in reciprocal give and take, the educational forces of our Volk into that new rooted unity from which the Volk in its State will commit itself to act in accordance with its destiny.

The University in the New Reich*

(June 30, 1933)

We have the new Reich and the university that is to receive its tasks from the Reich's will to existence. There is revolution in Germany, and

* A speech given by Heidegger as part of a series of political lectures organized by the Heidelberg Student Association, which appeared in the *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten*, July 1, 1933. It is of interest to note that in Heidegger's two post festum justifications of his activities as rector, *Das Rektorat 1933–34: Tatsachen und Gedanken* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983) and *Der Spiegel's* interview, "Only a God Can Save Us," Heidegger claims that he accepted the position only in order to prevent the rampant politicization of university life. Yet in "The University in the New Reich," as well as other speeches, it is clear that Heidegger set little store by "academic freedom" in the traditional sense. Instead, as we see, his program held that the university must be "integrated again into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and be joined together with the State . . . in the National Socialist spirit."

we must ask ourselves: *Is there revolution at the university as well?* No. The battle still consists of skirmishes. So far, only on one front has a breakthrough been achieved: because the education of young people is now occurring [*durch die Bildung neuen Lebens*] in the work camp and educational association [*Erziehungsverband*] as well as at the university, the latter *has been relieved of educational tasks* to which it *has till now believed it had an exclusive right*.

The possibility could exist that the university will suffer death through oblivion and forfeit the last vestige of its educational power. It must, however, be *integrated again into the Volksgemeinschaft* and *be joined together with the State*. The university must again become an educational force that draws on knowledge to educate the State's leaders to knowledge. This goal demands three things: 1) knowledge of today's university; 2) knowledge of the dangers today holds for the future; 3) new courage.

Up to now, *research* and *teaching* have been carried on at the universities as they were carried out for decades. Teaching was supposed to develop out of research, and one sought to find a pleasant balance between the two. It was always only the point of view of the teacher that spoke out of this notion. No one had concerned himself with the university as community. Research *got out of hand* and concealed its uncertainty behind the idea of international scientific and scholarly progress. Teaching that had become aimless hid behind examination requirements.

A *fierce battle* must be fought against this situation in the National Socialist spirit, and this spirit cannot be allowed to be suffocated by humanizing, Christian ideas that suppress its unconditionality. Nor is it enough if one wishes to take the new situation [*dem Neuen*] into account by painting everything with a touch of political color. Of great *danger* are the *noncommittal plans and slogans* that are turning up everywhere; and so, too, is the "*new*" concept of *Wissenschaft*, which is nothing more than the old one with a slight anthropological underpinning. All of the talk about "politics" is nonsense as well, for it does nothing to put an end to the old routine way of doing and thinking about things [*dem*

alten Schlendrian]. What the real gravity of the new situation [*des Neuen*] calls for is the experience of affliction [*Not*], is the active engagement with real conditions [*die zugreifende Auseinandersetzung mit den wirklichen Zuständen*]. Only *that activity is justified that is performed with full inner commitment to the future*. The warning cry has already been sounded: “Wissenschaft is endangered by the amount of time lost in martial sports and other such activities.” But what does that mean, to lose time, when it is a question of fighting for the State! *Danger* comes not from *work for the State*. It comes only from indifference and resistance. For that reason, only true strength should have access to the right path, but not halfheartedness.

New courage allows these dangers to be seen clearly. Only it alone opens our eyes to that which is to come and which is now emerging. It forces each teacher and pupil to *make up his mind about the fundamental questions of Wissenschaft*, and this decision is of epochal importance, for on it depends whether we Germans shall remain a people that is, in the highest sense of the word, knowing. The new teaching which is at issue here does not mean conveying knowledge, but allowing students to learn and inducing them to learn. This means allowing oneself to be beset by the unknown and then becoming master of it in comprehending knowing; it means becoming secure in one’s sense for what is essential. It is from such teaching that true research emerges, interlocked with the whole through its rootedness in the Volk and its bond to the State. The student is forced out into the uncertainty of all things, in which the necessity of engagement [*Einsatz*] is grounded. *University study must again become a risk* [*Wagnis*], not a refuge for the cowardly. Whoever does not survive the battle, lies where he falls. The new courage must accustom itself to steadfastness, for the battle for the institutions where our leaders are educated will continue for a long time. It will be fought out of the strengths of the new Reich that Chancellor Hitler will bring to reality. A hard race [*Geschlecht*] with no thought of self must fight this battle, a race that lives from constant testing and that remains directed towards the goal to which it has committed itself. It is a battle to determine who shall be the *teachers and leaders* at the university [*ein Kampf um die Gestalt des Lehrers und des Führers an der Universität*].

Martin Heidegger

German Students*
(November 3, 1933)

The National Socialist revolution is bringing about the total transformation of our German existence [*Dasein*].

In these events, it is up to you to remain the ones who always urge on and who are always ready, the ones who never yield and who always grow.

Your will to know seeks to experience what is essential, simple, and great.

You crave to be exposed to that which besets you most directly and to that which imposes upon you the most wide-ranging obligations.

Be hard and genuine in your demands.

Remain clear and sure in your rejection.

Do not pervert the knowledge you have struggled for into a vain, selfish possession. Preserve it as the necessary primal possession of the leader [*führerischen Menschen*] in the *völkisch* professions of the State. You can no longer be those who merely attend lectures [*die nur "Hörenden"*]. You are obligated to know and act together in the creation of the

* An appeal launched by Heidegger on the occasion of the plebiscite of November 12, 1933 called by Hitler to sanction (ex post facto) Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. Joachim Fest has referred to this plebiscite as "one of [Hitler's] most effective chess moves in the process of consolidating his power within Germany" (see Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1974], p. 439). Fest continues: "Since Hitler had intertwined his policies as a whole with the resolution to withdraw from the League by framing his plebiscite question in general terms, there was no way for the voter to express approval of his position on the League of Nations and at the same time condemn his domestic policies." That in his speech Heidegger accepted the Nazi Party line as suggested by Fest is illustrated by his remark in the following speech, "German Men and Women," that "there are not separate foreign and domestic policies." In other words, one should not quibble over individual aspects of the Nazi program. Either one accepts it as a whole, or one does not accept it at all. And thus, the November 12 plebiscite, though nominally concerned with a question of foreign policy, must be treated as a general confirmation of the National Revolution.

future university [*hohe Schule*] of the German spirit. Every one of you must first prove and justify each talent and privilege. That will occur through the force of your aggressive involvement [*Einsatz*] in the struggle of the entire Volk for itself.

Let your loyalty and your will to follow [*Gefolgschaftswille*] be daily and hourly strengthened. Let your courage grow without ceasing so that you will be able to make the sacrifices necessary to save the essence of our Volk and to elevate its innermost strength in the State.

Let not propositions and “ideas” be the rules of your Being [*Sein*].

The Führer alone *is* the present and future German reality and its law. Learn to know ever more deeply: from now on every single thing demands decision, and every action responsibility.

Heil Hitler!

Martin Heidegger, Rector

German Men and Women!*

(November 10, 1933)

The German people has been summoned by the Führer to vote; the Führer, however, is asking nothing from the people. Rather, he *is giving* the people the possibility of making, directly, the highest free decision of all: whether it—the entire people—wants its own existence [*Dasein*] or whether it does *not* want it.

This election simply cannot be compared to all other previous elections. What is unique about this election is the simple greatness of the decision that is to be executed. The inexorability of what is simple and ultimate [*des Einfachen und Letzten*], however, tolerates no vacillation and no hesitation. This ultimate decision reaches to the outermost limit of our people's existence. And what is this limit? It consists in the most basic demand of all Being [*Sein*], that it preserve and save its own essence. A barrier is thereby erected between what can be reasonably expected of a

* Another appeal to support the upcoming plebiscite, published by Heidegger in the *Freiburger Studentenzeitung*.

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people and what cannot. It is by virtue of this basic law of honor that a people preserves the dignity and resoluteness of its essence.

It is not ambition, not desire for glory, not blind obstinacy, and not hunger for power that demands from the Führer that Germany withdraw from the League of Nations. It is only the clear will to unconditional self-responsibility in enduring and mastering the fate of our people.

That is *not* a turning away from the community of nations. On the contrary—with this step, our people is submitting to that essential law of human existence to which every people must first give allegiance if it is still to be a people. It is only out of the parallel observance by all peoples of this unconditional demand of self-responsibility that there emerges the possibility of taking one another seriously so that a community can be affirmed.

The will to a true community of nations [*Völkergemeinschaft*] is equally far removed both from an unrestrained, vague desire for world brotherhood and from blind tyranny. Existing beyond this opposition, this will allows peoples and states to stand by one another in an open and manly fashion as self-reliant entities [*das offene und mannhafte Aufsich- und Zueinanderstehen der Völker und Staaten*].

The choice that the German people will now make is—simply as an event in itself, and independent of the outcome—the strongest evidence of the new German reality embodied in the National Socialist State.

Our will to national [*völkisch*] self-responsibility desires that each people find and preserve the greatness and truth of its destiny [*Bestimmung*]. This will is the highest guarantee of security among peoples; for it binds itself to the basic law of manly respect and unconditional honor.

On November 12, the German people as a whole will choose *its* future. This future is bound to the Führer. In choosing this future, the people cannot, on the basis of so-called foreign policy considerations, vote *Yes* without also including in this *Yes* the Führer and the political movement that has pledged itself unconditionally to him. There are not separate

foreign and domestic policies. There is only the one will to the full existence [*Dasein*] of the State.

The Führer has awakened this will in the entire people and has welded it into a single resolve.

No one can remain away from the polls on the day when this will is manifested.

Heidegger
Rector

**Declaration of Support for Adolf Hitler
and the National Socialist State* (November 11, 1933)**

German teachers and comrades!
German Volksgenossen and Volksgenossinnen!

The German people has been summoned by the Führer to vote; the Führer, however, is asking nothing from the people. Rather, he is giving the people the possibility of making, directly, the highest free decision of all: whether the entire people wants its own existence [*Dasein*] or whether it does *not* want it.

Tomorrow the people will choose nothing less than its future.

This election remains absolutely incomparable with all previous elections. What is unique about this election is the simple greatness of the decision that is to be executed. The inexorability of what is simple and ultimate [*des Einfachen und Letzten*] tolerates no vacillation and no hesitation. This ultimate decision reaches to the outermost limit of our people's existence. And what is this limit? It consists in the most basic demand of all Being [*Sein*], that it keep and save its own essence. A barrier is thereby erected between what can be reasonably expected of a people and what cannot. It is by virtue of this basic law of honor that

* Address presented by Heidegger at an election rally held by German university professors in Leipzig in support of the upcoming plebiscite.

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the German people retains the dignity and resoluteness of its life. However, the will to self-responsibility is not only the basic law of the people's existence; it is also the fundamental event in the bringing about of the people's National Socialist State. From this will to self-responsibility, every effort, be it humble or grand, of each social and occupational group [*Stand*] assumes its necessary and predestined place in the social order [*in den Standort und Rang ihrer gleich notwendigen Bestimmung*]. The labor of the various groups [*Stände*] supports and strengthens the living framework of the State; labor reconquers for the people its rootedness; labor places the State, as the reality of the people, into the field of action of all essential forces of human Being.

It is not ambition, not desire for glory, not blind obstinacy, and not hunger for power that demands from the Führer that Germany withdraw from the League of Nations. It is only the clear will to unconditional self-responsibility in suffering and mastering the fate of our people. That is *not* a turning away from the community of peoples. On the contrary: with this step, our people is submitting to that essential law of human Being to which every people must first give allegiance if it is still to be a people.

It is only out of the parallel observance by all peoples of this unconditional demand of self-responsibility that there emerges the possibility of taking each other seriously so that a community can also be affirmed. The will to a true national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*] is equally far removed both from an unrestrained, vague desire for world brotherhood and from blind tyranny. Existing beyond this opposition, this will allows peoples and states to stand by one another in an open and manly fashion as self-reliant entities [*das offene und mannhafte Aufsich- und Zueinanderstehen der Völker und Staaten*]. What is it that such a will brings about? Is it reversion into barbarism? No! It is the averting of all empty negotiation and hidden deal-making through the simple, great demand of self-responsible action. Is it the irruption of lawlessness? No! It is the clear acknowledgment of each people's inviolable independence. Is it the denial of the creative genius of a spiritual [*geistig*] people and the smashing of its historical traditions? No! It is the awakening of the young who have been purified and are growing back to their roots. Their will to the

State will make this people hard towards itself and reverent towards each genuine deed.

What sort of event is this then? The nation is winning back the *truth* of its will to existence, for truth is the revelation of that which makes a people confident, lucid, and strong in its actions and knowledge. The genuine will to know arises from such truth. And this will to know circumscribes the right to know. And from there, finally, the limits are measured out within which genuine questioning and research must legitimize and prove themselves. Such is the origin of *Wissenschaft*, which is constrained by the necessity of self-responsible *völkisch* existence. *Wissenschaft* is thus the passion to educate that has been restrained by this necessity, the passion to want to know in order to make knowing. *To be* knowing, however, means to be master of things in clarity and to be resolved to action.

We have declared our independence from the idol of thought that is without foundation and power. We see the end of the philosophy that serves such thought. We are certain that the clear hardness and the sure, steady competency [*werkgerechte Sicherheit*] of unyielding, simple questioning about the essence of Being are returning. For a *völkische Wissenschaft*, the courage either to grow or to be destroyed in confrontation with Being [*dem Seienden*], which is the first form of courage, is the innermost motive for questioning. For courage lures one forward; courage frees itself from what has been up to now; courage risks the unaccustomed and the incalculable. For us, questioning is not the unconstrained play of curiosity. Nor is questioning the stubborn insistence on doubt at any price. For us, questioning means: exposing oneself to the sublimity of things and their laws; it means: not closing oneself off to the terror of the untamed and to the confusion of darkness. To be sure, it is for the sake of this questioning that we question, and *not* to serve those who have grown tired and their complacent yearning for comfortable answers. We know: the courage to question, to experience the abysses of existence and to endure the abysses of existence, is in itself already a *higher* answer than any of the all-too-cheap answers afforded by artificial systems of thought.

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And so we, to whom the preservation of our people's will to know shall in the future be entrusted, declare: the National Socialist revolution is not merely the assumption of power as it exists presently in the State by another party, a party grown sufficiently large in numbers to be able to do so. Rather, this revolution is bringing about *the total transformation of our German existence* [*Dasein*]. From now on, each and every thing demands decision, and every deed demands responsibility. Of this we are certain: if the will to self-responsibility becomes the law that governs the coexistence of nations, then each people can and must be the master who instructs every other people in the richness and strength of all the great deeds and works of human Being [*Sein*].

The choice that the German people must now make is, *simply as an event in itself*, quite independently of the outcome, the strongest expression of the new German reality embodied in the National Socialist State. Our will to national [*völkisch*] self-responsibility desires that each people find and preserve the greatness and truth of its destiny [*Bestimmung*]. This will is the highest guarantee of peace among nations, for it binds itself to the basic law of manly respect and unconditional honor. The Führer has awakened this will in the entire people and has welded it into *one single resolve*. No one can remain away from the polls on the day when this will is manifested. Heil Hitler!

A Word from the University*

(January 6, 1934)

This retrospective look at its own history obligates the *Freiburger Zeitung* to commit itself to the future. The more directly the individual states that existed previously are absorbed by the new National Socialist State, the more resolutely the ethnic-cultural character [*das Volkstum*] of each Gau must be awakened and preserved in its original form; for only then will the entire Volk be able to develop its manifold strengths for creating a state. It was in order to realize this task that German education brought its work in line with the National Socialist political will [*Staatswille*]. The university is becoming the highest political school for the

* An article written by Heidegger on the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the *Freiburger Zeitung*.

people of the region where it is located. This newspaper, however, which is limited to and bound to the concerns and traditions of the Alemannic people, must not merely print the occasional report on school celebrations or faculty appointments. It must transform the educational work of the school into public state-mindedness in the village and, in the city, into a political existence that remains bound to the rural areas.

Heidegger

Rector of the University of Freiburg

The Call to the Labor Service*

(January 23, 1934)

The new path that is being followed by the education of our German young men [*Jungmannschaft*] leads through the Labor Service.

Such service provides the basic experience of hardness, of closeness to the soil and to the implements of labor, of the rigorous law that governs the simplest physical—and thus essential—labor in a group.

Such service provides the basic experience of daily existence in a camp community, an existence that is strictly ordered according to the requirements of the tasks that the group has undertaken.

Such service provides the basic experience of having put daily to the test [*auf die Probe und in die Entscheidung gestellt*], and thus clarified and reinforced, one's sense of social origin [*der ständischen Herkunft*] and of the responsibility that derives for the individual from the fact that all belong together in an ethnic-cultural [*volkhaft*] unity.

Such service provides the basic experience of the origin of true comradeship. True comradeship only arises under the pressure of a great common danger or from the ever-growing commitment to a clearly perceived task; it has nothing to do with the effusive exchange of psychological [*seelisch*] inhibitions by individuals who have agreed to sleep, eat, and sing under one roof.

* An article written by Heidegger for the *Freiburger Studentenzeitung*.

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Such service provides the basic experience of those things which will allow the individual to be able to truly take stock of himself, and it takes the final decision in the choice of a profession out of the realm of the private bourgeois calculation of prospects according to the principle of “appropriateness to one’s social standing.”

We must think beyond the immediate effects of Labor Service, which are already apparent, and learn to comprehend the fact that here, with the German young people who are now taking their place in society, a complete transformation of German existence [*Dasein*] is being made ready. Within the German university, a new basic attitude towards scholarly and scientific work [*wissenschaftliche Arbeit*] will slowly develop. And as this happens, that notion of the “intellect” [“*Geist*”] and of “intellectual work” [“*geistige Arbeit*”] will completely disappear in terms of which the “educated” person has up to now defined his life and which even now his envoys want to salvage for a separate estate [*Stand*] of “intellectual producers.” Only then will we learn that, *as work*, all work is *spiritual* [*geistig*]. Animals and all beings that merely exist cannot work. They lack the basic experience that work requires: the decisive commitment to a task, the capacity for resoluteness and steadfastness in an assignment they have accepted. In short, they lack *freedom*, that is: *spirit* [*Geist*].

So-called “intellectual work” [“*geistige Arbeit*”] is not spiritual [*geistig*] because it relates to “higher spiritual things” [“*höhere geistige Dinge*”]. It is spiritual [*geistig*] because, *as work*, it reaches back more deeply into the afflictions [*Not*] that are part of a people’s historical existence [*Dasein*] and because it is more directly—because more knowingly—beset by the hardness and danger of human existence [*Dasein*].

There is only *one single* German “estate” [“*Lebensstand*”]. That is the *estate of labor* [*Arbeitsstand*] which is rooted in and borne by the Volk and which has freely submitted to the historical will of the State. The character of this estate is being pre-formed in the National Socialist Workers’ Party movement.

A call to the Labor Service is being sounded.

Those who are lame, comfortable, and effete will “go” into the Labor Service because it will perhaps jeopardize their degree and employment prospects to stay away. Those who are strong and unbroken are proud that extreme demands are being made of them: for that is the moment when they rise up to the hardest tasks, those for which there is neither pay nor praise, but only the “reward” of sacrifice and service in the area of the innermost necessities of German Being [*deutschen Seins*].

National Socialist Education*
(January 22, 1934)

German Volksgenossen! German Workers!

As Rector of the University, I cordially welcome you to our institution. This welcome will at the same time be the beginning of our work together. Let us start by understanding clearly the significance of the fact that you, for whom the City of Freiburg has created jobs by emergency decree, are coming together with us in the largest lecture hall of the University.

What does this fact mean?

Because of novel and comprehensive measures on the part of the City of Freiburg you have been given work and bread has been put on your tables. You thereby enjoy a privileged position among the rest of the City's unemployed. But this preferential treatment means at the same time an obligation.

And your duty is to understand the creation of jobs, and to accept the work for which you are paid, in the way that the Führer of our new State demands. For the creation of jobs means not only the alleviation of external need, not only the elimination of inner discouragement or, indeed, despair; the creation of jobs means not only the *warding off* of that which burdens. The creation of jobs is at the same time, and in its

* An address given by Heidegger at Freiburg University to 600 beneficiaries of the National Socialist “labor service” (*Arbeitsdienst*) program (see note, p. 42). Published in *Der Alemann: Kampfblatt der Nationalsozialisten Oberbadens*, February 1, 1934.

essence, an act of *building up* and construction [*Aufbau und Bau*] in the new future of our Volk.

The creation of work must, first of all, make the unemployed and jobless *Volksgenosse* again *capable of existing* [*daseinsfähig*] in the State and for the State and thereby capable of existing for the Volk as a whole. The *Volksgenosse* who has found work should learn thereby that he has not been cast aside and abandoned, that he has an ordered place in the Volk, and that every service and every accomplishment possesses its own value that is fungible by other services and accomplishments. Having experienced this, he should win back proper dignity and self-confidence in his own eyes and acquire proper self-assurance and resoluteness in the eyes of his *Volksgenossen*.

The goal is: to become strong for a fully valid existence as a *Volksgenosse* in the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.

For this, however, it is necessary:

- to know where one's place in the Volk is,
- to know how the Volk is organized and how it renews itself in this organization,
- to know what is happening with the German Volk in the National Socialist State,
- to know in what a bitter struggle this new reality was won and created,
- to know what the future recovery of the body of the Volk [*Volkskörper*] means and what it demands of each individual,
- to know to what point urbanization has brought the Germans, how they would be returned to the soil and the country through resettlement,
- to know what is entailed in the fact that 18 million Germans belong to the Volk but, because they are living outside the borders of the Reich, do not yet belong to the Reich.

Everyone of our Volk who is employed must *know for what reason* and *to what purpose* he is where he is. It is only through this living and ever-present *knowledge* that his life will be rooted in the Volk as a whole, and in its destiny. *Providing this knowledge is thus a necessary part of*

the creation of work; and it is your right, but therefore also your obligation, to demand this knowledge and to endeavor to acquire it.

And now, your younger comrades from the *university* stand ready to help you acquire this knowledge. They are resolved to help that knowledge to become alive in you, to help it develop and grow strong and never again to slumber. They stand ready, not as “intellekshuals” [“*Gschtudierten*”] from the class of your “betters,” but as *Volksgenossen*’ who have recognized their duty.

They stand ready, not as the “educated” vis-à-vis a class—indeed, a “lower class”—of *uneducated* individuals, but as comrades. They are prepared to listen to your questions, your problems, your difficulties, and your doubts, to think through them with you, and, in shared effort, to bring them to a clear and decisive resolution. What, therefore, is the significance of the fact that you are assembled here in the auditorium of the University with us?

This fact is a sign that a new, common will exists, the will to build a *living bridge* between the worker of the “hand” and the worker of the “head.” Today, the will to bridge this gap is no longer a project that is doomed to failure. And why not? Because the whole of our German reality has been changed by the National Socialist State, with the result that our whole past way of understanding and thinking must also become different.

What we thought up to now when we used the words “knowledge” and “Wissenschaft” has taken on another significance.

What we meant up to now with the words “worker” and “work” has acquired another meaning.

“Wissenschaft” is not the possession of a privileged class of citizens, to be used as a weapon in the exploitation of the working people. Rather, Wissenschaft is merely the *more rigorous* and hence *more responsible* form of that knowledge which the entire German Volk must seek and

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demand for its own historical existence as a state [*sein eigenes geschichtlich-staatliches Dasein*] if it still wants to secure its continued existence and greatness and to preserve them in the future. *In its essence*, the knowledge of true Wissenschaft does *not* differ *at all* from the knowledge of the farmer, woodcutter, the miner, the artisan. For knowledge means: *to know one's way around* in the world into which we are placed, as a community and as individuals.

Knowledge means: in our decisions and actions *to be up to* the task that is assigned us, whether this task be to till the soil or to fell a tree or to dig a ditch or to inquire into the laws of Nature or to illumine the fate-like force of History.

Knowledge means: to be *master* of the situation into which we are placed.

What is decisive is not so much how varied our knowledge is and what quantity of things we know, but whether our knowledge has grown naturally out of and is directed towards our circle of existence [*ein ursprünglich gewachsenes und auf unseren Daseinskreis aussgerichtetes*] and whether, through our deeds and in our behavior, we take responsibility for what we know. We no longer distinguish between the “educated” and the “uneducated.” And not because these are both the same, but because we no longer tie our estimation of a person to this distinction. We do, on the other hand, differentiate between *genuine knowledge* and *pseudo-knowledge*. Genuine knowledge is something that both the farmer and the manual laborer have, each in his own way and in his own field of work, just as the scholar has it in his field. And, on the other hand, for all his learning, the scholar can in fact simply be wasting his time in the idle pursuit of pseudo-knowledge.

If you are to become *ones who know* here, then that does not mean that you will be served up scraps of some “general education,” as a charitable afterthought. Rather, *that knowledge* shall be awakened in you *by means of which you*—each in his respective class and work group—*can be clear and resolute Germans*.

Knowledge and the possession of knowledge, as National Socialism understands these words, does not divide into classes, but binds and unites *Volksgenossen* and social and occupational groups [*Stände*] in the one great will of the State.

Like these words “knowledge” and “Wissenschaft,” the words “worker” and “work,” too, have a transformed meaning and a new sound. The “worker” is not, as Marxism claimed, a mere object of exploitation. The workers [*Arbeiterstand*] are not the class of the disinherited who are rallying for the general class struggle. But labor is also not simply the production of goods for others. Nor is labor simply the occasion and the means to earn a living. Rather:

For us, “work” is the title of every well-ordered action that is borne by the responsibility of the individual, the group, and the State and which is thus of service to the Volk.

Work only exists where man’s determination and perseverance are freely engaged in the assertion of will and the accomplishment of a task; *but there it exists everywhere*. Therefore, all work is, *as work*, something spiritual [*Geistiges*], for it is founded in the free exercise of expert knowledge and in the competent understanding of one’s task; that is: it is founded in authentic knowledge [*eigentliches Wissen*]. The accomplishment of a miner is basically no less spiritual [*geistig*] than the activity of a scholar.

Worker and work, as National Socialism understands these words, does not divide into classes, but binds and unites *Volksgenossen* and the social and occupational groups into the one great will of the State.

The “workers” and “academics” [*die “wissenschaftlich Wissenden”*] are not opposites. Every worker is, in his own way, one who knows; and only as one who knows is he able to work at all. The privilege of work is denied the animal. And conversely: every person who acts knowingly and who makes decisions in and on the basis of *Wissenschaft* [*wissenschaftlich Entscheidender*] *is a worker*.

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For this reason, neither for you nor for us can the will to build a living bridge remain any longer an empty, hopeless wish. This will, *to consummate the creation of jobs by providing the right kind of knowledge*, this will must be our innermost certainty and never-faltering faith. For in what this will wills, we are only following the towering will of our Führer. To be his loyal followers means: to will that the German people shall again find, as a people of labor, its organic unity, its simple dignity, and its true strength; and that, as a state of labor, it shall secure for itself permanence and greatness.

To the man of this unprecedented will, to our Führer *Adolf Hitler*—a threefold “Sieg Heil!”

Translated by William S. Lewis

LETTER TO THE RECTOR OF FREIBURG UNIVERSITY, NOVEMBER 4, 1945

With reference to the Rector's letter of October 30, 1945, I request to be reinstated in my professorial duties (reintegration). I also remind you that on October 8, 1945 I submitted my request for emeritus status to the philosophy faculty. I ask that you convey this request to the proper authorities.

Regarding the reasons for and conditions of my entry into the Party on May 1, 1933, as well as my relations with the Party during the years 1933–1945, I wish to make the following observations:

I. The Rectorship, 1933–1934

In April 1933, I was unanimously elected Rector (with two abstentions) in a plenary session of the university and not, as rumor has it, appointed by the National Socialist minister. It was as a result of pressure from my circle of colleagues, and especially upon the urgent request of my predecessor [Wilhelm] von Möllendorff, that I consented to be a candidate for this election and agreed to serve. Previously I neither desired nor occupied an academic office. I never belonged to a political party nor maintained a relation, either personal or substantive, with the NSDAP or with governmental authorities. I accepted the rectorship reluctantly and in the interest of the university alone.

However, I was nevertheless absolutely convinced that an autonomous alliance of intellectuals [*der Geistigen*] could deepen and transform a number of essential elements of the "National Socialist movement"

Heidegger's Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, November 4, 1945, may be found in Karl A. Moehling, "Martin Heidegger and the Nazi Party: An Examination." Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1972.

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and thereby contribute in its own way to overcoming Europe's disarray and the crisis of the Western spirit. Three [sic] addresses by a man of no lesser rank than Paul Valéry ("The Crisis of Spirit," "The Politics of Spirit," "Our Sovereign Good," "The Balance of Intelligence") constitute sufficient proof of the seriousness, concern, and profundity with which the destiny of the West became an object of reflection outside of Germany during these years. Also, insofar as the will manifested by the free choice of the preponderant majority of the German people affirmed the labor of reconstruction in a National Socialist direction, I viewed it as necessary and feasible to join in at the university level in order to remedy in a consistent and effective manner the general confusion and threat that weighed against the West. And it is precisely because in the realm of the sciences and of spirit so-called "impossible" persons strove to assert their power and influence on the "movement" that it seemed to me necessary to emphasize essentially spiritual goals and horizons and to try, on the basis of Western responsibility, to further their influence and reality. I explained my intentions with sufficient clarity in my rectoral address, "The Self-Assertion of the German University" (1933). If I may be permitted to explain the basic spiritual tenor of the address from a twofold perspective: on page 13, with reference to the essential task of spirit, it says: "And the spiritual world of a people is neither the superstructure of a culture, nor an attestation of practical knowledge and values. . . . The greatness of a Volk is guaranteed by its spiritual world alone." For those who know and think, these sentences express my opposition to [Alfred] Rosenberg's conception, according to which, conversely, spirit and the world of spirit are merely an "expression" and emanation of racial facts and of the physical constitution of man. According to the dogma of "politicized science," which was then propagated by the National Socialist student organizations, the sciences should serve as a model for vocational goals, and the value or the lack of value of knowledge should be measured according to the needs of "life." In response, the address clearly and unambiguously has this to say: "Knowledge does not stand in the service of the professions, but the reverse: the professions effectuate and administer this highest, essential knowledge of the Volk concerning its entire Dasein." "The university" is "the locus of spiritual legislation." All of those who are capable of substantive thought [*sachliche Denken*] will be able to judge whether the essence of the university can be thought in a more exalted manner than

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here. And whether the essence of the various fields of knowledge has, from a spiritual standpoint, been defined in a more clear or categorical fashion than in this formulation: "The departments are only departments if they are deployed in a power of spiritual legislation that is rooted in a capacity consistent with their essence, in order that they might transform the force of Dasein which besieges *them* into a *single* spiritual world of the Volk."

In the spirit of this address, I tried, following the irremediably disruptive summer semester of revolution [in 1933] and despite the many setbacks experienced thus far, in the initial months of the 1933–34 winter semester to keep the business of the university going. It was clear for me that to act in the middle of the frictions of real life was not possible without compromise and concessions in unessential matters. But I was equally convinced, especially following Hitler's May 1933 speech asking for peace, that my basic spiritual position and my conception of the task of the university could be reconciled with the political will of those in power.

The practical efforts of the winter semester failed. During the few days of Christmas vacation I realized that it was a mistake to believe that, from the basic spiritual position that was the result of my long years of philosophical work, I could immediately influence the transformation of the bases—spiritual or non-spiritual—of the National Socialist movement. At the beginning of 1934 I decided to abandon my duties at the end of the semester. The increasing hostility of the minister to my work as rector manifested itself in practice by the summons to replace the deans of the divisions of law and medicine (professors Wolf and von Möllendorff) because they were politically unacceptable. I refused to acquiesce in this demand and handed in my resignation. (I refused equally to assist in the traditional ceremony of the inauguration of my successor, who was installed by force and acclaimed as the first National Socialist rector. I gave as my explanation that there was nothing to "hand over" since the new rector was chosen and nominated by the government.)

II. My Entry into the Party

A short while after I took control of the rectorship the district head presented himself, accompanied by two functionaries in charge of uni-

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versity matters, to urge me, in accordance with the wishes of the minister, to join the Party. The minister insisted that in this way my official relations with the Party and the governing organs would be simplified, especially since up until then I had had no contact with these organs. After lengthy consideration, I declared myself ready to enter the Party in the interests of the university, but under the express condition of refusing to accept a position within the Party or working on behalf of the Party either during the rectorship or afterward. These conditions were accepted by the leader of the district, and I adhered to them strictly thereafter.

III. My Relation to the Party after 1933

My membership [in the Party] resulted in practically no advantages as far as the facilitation of my administrative duties was concerned. I was never invited to meetings of the district leadership. University personnel began to mistrust me. After my resignation from the rectorship it became clear that by continuing to teach, my opposition to the principles of the National Socialist world-view would only grow. There was little need for me to resort to specific attacks; it sufficed for me to express my fundamental philosophical positions against the dogmatism and primitivism of Rosenberg's biologism. I found myself in an essentially different situation from that of other representatives of scientific disciplines, where there was neither immediately nor in principle a need to formulate fundamental metaphysical positions; and this is precisely what I did during all of my hours in the classroom. Since National Socialist ideology became increasingly inflexible and increasingly less disposed to a purely philosophical interpretation, the fact that I was active as a philosopher was itself a sufficient expression of opposition. During the first semester that followed my resignation I conducted a course on logic and under the title, the doctrine of *logos*, treated the essence of language. I sought to show that language was not the biological-racial essence of man, but conversely, that the essence of man was based in language as a basic reality of *spirit*. All intelligent students understood this lecture as well as its basic intention. It was equally understood by the observers and informers who then gave reports of my activities to [Ernst] Kriek in Heidelberg, to [Alfred] Bäumler in Berlin, and to Rosenberg, the head of National Socialist scientific services. Thereafter there began a mali-

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cious polemic against my thought and person in *Volk im Werden*, a review edited by Krieck. During the journal's twelve years in print, there hardly appeared an issue that didn't contain some heinous and misleading point about my thought. All these declarations emanating from the Party press were made in the same tone whenever I lectured before scholarly organizations, in my lectures on "The Origins of the Work of Art," or on "The Metaphysical Foundations of the Modern Picture of the World." No member of the Freiburg University faculty was defamed to such a degree during the years 1933–34 in newspapers and journals, and, in addition, in the journal of the Hitler Youth, *Will and Power*.

Beginning in 1936 I embarked on a series of courses and lectures on Nietzsche, which lasted until 1945 and which represented in even clearer fashion a declaration of spiritual resistance. In truth, it is unjust to assimilate Nietzsche to National Socialism, an assimilation which—apart from what is essential—ignores his hostility to anti-Semitism and his positive attitude with respect to Russia. But on a higher plane, the debate with Nietzsche's metaphysics is a debate with *nihilism* as it manifests itself with increased clarity under the political form of fascism.

The Party functionaries also took note of the spiritual resistance of my courses on Nietzsche, which led to measures such as the following:

In 1934, I was excluded, at Rosenberg's urging, from the German delegation of the International Congress of Philosophy. I was also excluded in 1937 from the German delegation at the Descartes conference in Paris, which was also an international philosophical conference (although the French for their part twice expressly requested that I attend). The reedition of my work, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which originally appeared in 1929 and which was out of print as of 1931, and which contained a refutation of philosophical anthropology, was also banned at the instigation of the same office. From 1938 on, one could no longer cite my name nor evaluate my works as a result of secret instructions given to journal editors. I cite one such directive dating from 1940, which was revealed to me in confidence by friends:

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Martin Heidegger's essay, "Plato's Concept of Truth," to appear soon in the Berlin journal, *Jahrbuch für geistige Überlieferung*, edited by Helmut Küper, may be neither reviewed nor cited. Heidegger's participation in this number of the journal, which otherwise may be reviewed, should not be mentioned.

The publication of this essay, which was accepted by the editor for a special edition to be sold in bookstores, was forbidden. The same thing occurred with my contribution to a volume commemorating Hölderlin, which had to appear in a separate edition.

Whereas my name and writings have been passed over in silence in Germany, where it has been impossible for me to publish individual works—in 1943 three small lectures appeared in secret, without ever being cited in any bibliography—during the war I was on many occasions invited for propagandistic ends to give lectures in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. I formally refused these strange invitations by making it known that I was not disposed to lend my name abroad for purposes of propaganda while I was not allowed to publish my writings in my own country.

The German Institute of Paris utilized the same methods as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a collection entitled *Friedrich Hölderlin*, which was published in 1943 in Paris, it reproduced my lecture, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," which appeared in 1936 and was translated into French in 1938, in the same translation and *without my knowledge*, and without the permission of the French translator. This arbitrary publication occurred despite the fact that I had already declined the offer to participate in a review published by the same institute.

I also demonstrated publicly my attitude toward the Party by not participating in its gatherings, by not wearing its regalia, and, as of 1934, by refusing to begin my courses and lectures with the so-called German greeting [Heil Hitler!].

There was nothing special about my spiritual resistance during the last eleven years. However, if crude claims continue to be advanced that numerous students had been "enticed" toward "National Socialism" by my year as rector, justice requires that one at least recognize that between 1934 and 1944 thousands of students were trained to reflect on the metaphysical basis of our age and that I opened their eyes to the world of spirit and its great traditions in the history of the West.

Martin Heidegger

Translated by Richard Wolin

OVERCOMING METAPHYSICS

I

What does “overcoming metaphysics” mean? In the thinking of the history of Being, this rubric is used only as an aid for that thinking to be comprehensible at all. In truth, this rubric is the occasion for a great deal of misunderstanding because it doesn’t allow experience to reach the ground in virtue of which the history of Being first reveals its essence. This essence is the Appropriating in which Being itself is overcome. Above all, overcoming does not mean thrusting aside a discipline from the field of philosophical “education.” “Metaphysics” is already thought as the destiny of the truth of beings, that is, of beingness, as a still hidden but distinctive Appropriating, namely the oblivion of Being.

Since overcoming is meant as a product of philosophy, the more adequate rubric might be: the past of metaphysics. Of course this calls forth new erroneous opinions. The past means here: to perish and enter what has been. In that metaphysics perishes, it *is* past. The past does not exclude, but rather includes, the fact that metaphysics is now for the first time beginning its unconditional rule in beings themselves, and rules as beings in the form, devoid of truth, of what is real and of objects. Experienced in virtue of the dawning of the origin, metaphysics is, however, at the same time past in the sense that it has entered its ending. The ending lasts longer than the previous history of metaphysics.

II

Metaphysics cannot be abolished like an opinion. One can by no means leave it behind as a doctrine no longer believed and represented.

“Overcoming Metaphysics” (“Überwindung der Metaphysik”) first appeared in Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954). This English translation by Joan Stambaugh appeared in Martin Heidegger, *The End of Metaphysics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). Grateful acknowledgment is made to Harper and Row for permission to reprint.

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The fact that man as *animal rationale*, here meant in the sense of the working being, must wander through the desert of the earth's desolation could be a sign that metaphysics occurs in virtue of Being, and the overcoming of metaphysics occurs as the incorporation of Being. For labor (cf. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*, 1932) is now reaching the metaphysical rank of the unconditional objectification of everything present which is active in the will to will.

If this is so, we may not presume to stand outside of metaphysics because we surmise the ending of metaphysics. For metaphysics overcome in this way does not disappear. It returns transformed, and remains in dominance as the continuing difference of Being and beings.

The decline of the truth of beings means: the openness of beings and *only* beings loses the previous uniqueness of their authoritative claim.

III

The decline of the truth of beings occurs necessarily, and indeed as the completion of metaphysics.

The decline occurs through the collapse of the world characterized by metaphysics, and at the same time through the desolation of the earth stemming from metaphysics.

Collapse and desolation find their adequate occurrence in the fact that metaphysical man, the *animal rationale*, gets fixed as the laboring animal.

This rigidification confirms the most extreme blindness to the oblivion of Being. But man wills *himself* as the volunteer of the will to will, for which all truth becomes that error which it needs in order to be able to guarantee for itself the illusion that the will to will can will nothing other than empty nothingness, in the face of which it asserts itself without being able to know its own completed nullity.

Before Being can occur in its primal truth, Being as the will must be broken, the world must be forced to collapse and the earth must be driven to desolation, and man to mere labor. Only after this decline does the abrupt dwelling of the Origin take place for a long span of time. In the decline, everything, that is, beings in the whole of the truth of metaphysics, approaches its end.

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The decline has already taken place. The consequences of this occurrence are the events of world history in this century. They are merely the course of what has already ended. Its course is ordered historico-technologically in the sense of the last stage of metaphysics. This order is the last arrangement of what has ended in the illusion of a reality whose effects work in an irresistible way, because they claim to be able to get along without an unconcealment of the *essence of Being*. They do this so decisively that they need suspect nothing of such an unconcealment.

The still hidden truth of Being is withheld from metaphysical humanity. The laboring animal is left to the giddy whirl of its products so that it may tear itself to pieces and annihilate itself in empty nothingness.

IV

How does metaphysics belong to man's nature? Metaphysically represented, man is constituted with faculties as a being among others. His essence constituted in such a way, his nature, the what and how of his Being, are in themselves metaphysical: *animal* (sensuousness) and *rationale* (nonsensuous). Thus confined to what is metaphysical, man is caught in the difference of beings and Being which he never experiences. The manner of human representation which is metaphysically characterized finds everywhere only the metaphysically constructed world. Metaphysics belongs to the nature of man. But what is this nature itself? What is metaphysics itself? Who is man himself within this natural metaphysics? Is he only an ego which first thoroughly fixates itself in its egoity through appealing to a thou in the I-thou relationship?

For Descartes the *ego cogito* is what is already represented and produced in all *cogitationes*, what is present without question, what is indubitable and always standing within knowledge, what is truly certain, what stands firm in advance of everything, namely as that which places everything in relation to *itself* and thus "over against" others.

To the object there belongs both the what-constituent of that which stands over against (*essentia-possibilitas*) and the actual standing of that which stands opposite (*existentia*). The object is the unity of the constancy of what persists. In its standing, persistence is essentially related to the presentation of re-presentation as the guarantee of having-some-

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thing-in-front-of-oneself. The original object is objectively itself. Original objectivity is the "I think," in the sense of the "I perceive" which already presents and has presented itself in advance for everything perceivable. It is the *subiectum*. In the order of the transcendental genesis of the object, the subject is the first object of ontological representation.

Ego cogito is cogito: me cogitare.

V

The modern form of ontology is transcendental philosophy which becomes epistemology.

How does such a thing arise in modern metaphysics? In that the beingness of beings is thought as presence *for* the guarantee of representation. Beingness is now objectivity. The question about objectivity, about the possibility of standing over against (namely, over against guaranteeing, calculating representation) is the question about knowability.

But this question is not really meant as the question about the psychophysical mechanism of the procedure of knowing, but rather about the possibility of the presence of the object in and for knowledge.

"Epistemology" is viewing, *theoria*, in that the *on*, thought as object, is questioned with regard to objectivity and what makes objectivity possible (*be on*).

How does Kant guarantee the metaphysical element of modern metaphysics through the transcendental manner of questioning? In that truth becomes certainty and thus the beingness (*ousia*) of beings changes to the objectivity of *perceptio* and the *cogitatio* of consciousness, of knowledge; knowing and knowledge move to the foreground.

"Epistemology" and what goes under that name is at bottom metaphysics and ontology which is based on truth as the certainty of guaranteed representation.

On the other hand, the interpretation of "epistemology" as the explanation of "knowledge" and as the "theory" of the sciences errs, although this business of guaranteeing is only a consequence of the reinterpretation of Being as objectivity and representedness.

"Epistemology" is the title for the increasing, essential powerlessness of modern metaphysics to know its own essence and the ground of that

essence. The talk about “metaphysics of knowledge” remains within the same misunderstanding. In truth, it is a matter of the metaphysics of the object, that is, of beings as object, of the object for a subject.

The mere reverse side of the empirical-positivistic misinterpretation of epistemology shows itself in the growing dominance of logistics.

VI

The completion of metaphysics begins with Hegel's metaphysics of absolute knowledge as the Spirit of will.

Why is this metaphysics only the beginning of the completion and not the completion itself? Hasn't unconditional certainty come to itself as absolute reality?

Is there still a possibility here of self-transcendence? Probably not. But the possibility of unconditional self-examination as the will of life is still not accomplished. The will has not yet appeared as the will to will in its reality which it has prepared. Hence metaphysics is not yet completed with the absolute metaphysics of the Spirit.

In spite of the superficial talk about the breakdown of Hegelian philosophy, one thing remains true: only this philosophy determined reality in the nineteenth century, although not in the external form of a doctrine followed, but rather as metaphysics, as the dominance of beingness in the sense of certainty. The countermovements to this metaphysics belong to it. Ever since Hegel's death (1831), everything is merely a countermovement, not only in Germany, but also in Europe.

VII

It is characteristic for metaphysics that in it *existentia* is always consistently treated only briefly and as a matter of course, if it is treated at all (cf. the inadequate explanation of the postulates of reality in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*). The sole exception is Aristotle, who thinks out *energeia*, without this thinking ever being able to become essential in its originality in the future. The transformation of *energeia* to *actualitas* and reality buried everything which became apparent in *energeia*. The connection between *ousia* and *energeia* becomes obscure. Hegel first thinks out *existentia*, but in his “Logic.” Schelling thinks it in the distinc-

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tion of ground and existence. However, this distinction is rooted in subjectivity.

A later and confused echo of Being as *physis* shows itself in the narrowing down of Being to "Nature."

Reason and freedom are contrasted with nature. Because nature is what-is, freedom and the ought are not thought as Being. The opposition of Being and the ought, Being and value, remains. Finally Being itself, too, becomes a mere "value" when the will enters its most extreme deformation of essence. Value is thought as a condition of the will.

VIII

Metaphysics is in all its forms and historical stages a unique, but perhaps necessary, fate of the West and the presupposition of its planetary dominance. The will of that planetary dominance is now in turn affecting the center of the West. Again, only a will meets the will from this center.

The development of the unconditional dominance of metaphysics is only at its start. This beginning starts when metaphysics affirms its deformation of essence which is adequate to it, and surrenders its essence to that deformation and fixates it there.

Metaphysics is a fate in the strict sense, which is the only sense intended here, that it lets mankind be suspended in the middle of beings as a fundamental trait of Western European history, *without* the Being of beings ever being able to be experienced and questioned and structured in its truth *as the twofoldness* of both in terms of metaphysics and through metaphysics.

This fate, which is to be thought in the manner of the history of Being, is, however, necessary, because Being itself can open out in its truth the difference of Being and beings preserved in itself only when the difference explicitly takes place. But how can it do this if beings have not first entered the most extreme oblivion of Being, and if at the same time Being has not taken over its unconditional dominance, metaphysically incomprehensible, as the will to will which asserts itself at first and uniquely through the sole precedence of beings (of what is objectively real) over Being?

Thus what can be distinguished in the difference in a way presents itself, and yet keeps itself hidden in a strange incomprehensibility. Hence

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the difference itself remains veiled. A sign of this is the metaphysico-technological reaction to pain which at the same time predetermines the interpretation of the essence of pain.

Together with the beginning of the completion of metaphysics, the preparation begins, unrecognized and essentially inaccessible to metaphysics, for a first appearance of the twofoldness of Being and beings. In this appearance the first resonance of the truth of Being still conceals itself, taking back into itself the precedence of Being with regard to its dominance.

IX

Overcoming metaphysics is thought in the manner of the history of Being. It is the preliminary sign of the primal incorporation of the oblivion of Being. More prior, although also more concealed than the preliminary sign, is what shows itself in that sign. This is Appropriation itself. What looks to the metaphysical way of thinking like the preliminary sign of something else, is taken into account only as the last mere illusion of a more primal opening out.

Overcoming is worthy of thought only when we think about incorporation. This perduring thinking still thinks at the same time about overcoming. Such remembrance experiences the unique Appropriating of the expropriating of beings, in which the need of the truth of Being, and thus the origination of truth, opens up and radiates upon human being in the manner of a parting. Overcoming is the delivering over of metaphysics to its truth.

At first the overcoming of metaphysics can only be represented in terms of metaphysics itself, so to speak, in the manner of a heightening of itself through itself. In this case the talk about the metaphysics of metaphysics, which is touched upon in the book *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, is justified in that it attempts to interpret the Kantian idea from this perspective, which still stems from the mere critique of rationalist metaphysics. However, more is thus attributed to Kant's thinking than he himself was able to think within the limits of his philosophy.

The talk of overcoming metaphysics can also mean that "metaphysics" is the name for the Platonism portrayed in the modern world by the

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interpretation of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The reversal of Platonism, according to which for Nietzsche the sensuous becomes the true world and the suprasensuous becomes the untrue world, is thoroughly caught in metaphysics. This kind of overcoming of metaphysics, which Nietzsche has in mind in the spirit of nineteenth-century positivism, is only the final entanglement in metaphysics, although in a higher form. It looks as if the "meta," the transcendence to the suprasensuous, were replaced by the persistence in the elemental world of sensuousness, whereas actually the oblivion of Being is only completed and the suprasensuous is let loose and furthered by the will to power.

X

Without being able to know it and without permitting a knowledge about it, the will to will wards off every destiny, whereby we understand by destiny the granting of an openness of the Being of beings. The will to will rigidifies everything in lack of destiny. The consequence of lack of destiny is the unhistorical. Its characteristic is the dominance of historiography. Historiography's being at a loss is historicism. If one wanted to construct the history of Being in accordance with the *historiographical* representational thinking common today, the dominance of the oblivion of Being's destiny would be confirmed by this mistake in the most blatant way. The epoch of completed metaphysics stands before its beginning.

The will to will forces the calculation and arrangement of everything for itself as the basic forms of appearance, only, however, for the unconditionally protractible guarantee of itself.

The basic form of appearance in which the will to will arranges and calculates itself in the unhistorical element of the world of completed metaphysics can be stringently called "technology." This name includes all the areas of beings which equip the whole of beings: objectified nature, the business of culture, manufactured politics, and the gloss of ideals overlying everything. Thus "technology" does not signify here the separate areas of the production and equipment of machines. The latter of course have a position of power, to be more closely defined, which is grounded in the precedence of matter as the supposedly elemental and primarily objective factor.

The name "technology" is understood here in such an essential way that its meaning coincides with the term "completed metaphysics." It contains the recollection of *techne*, which is a fundamental condition of the essential development of metaphysics in general. At the same time, the name makes it possible for the planetary factor of the completion of metaphysics and its dominance to be thought without reference to historiographically demonstrable changes in nations and continents.

XI

Nietzsche's metaphysics makes apparent the second to the last stage of the will's development of the beingness of beings as the will to will. The last stage's failure to appear is grounded in the predominance of "psychology," in the concept of power and force, in life-enthusiasm. For this reason this thinking lacks the strictness and carefulness of the concept and the peacefulness of historical reflection. Historiography rules and, thus, apologetics and polemics.

Why did Nietzsche's metaphysics lead to a scorn of thinking under the banner of "life"? Because no one realized how, according to Nietzsche's doctrine, the representational-calculative (empowering) guarantee of stability is just as essential for "life" as "increase" and escalation. Escalation itself has been taken only in the aspect of the intoxicating (psychologically), but not in the decisive aspect of at the same time giving to the guarantee of stability the true and ever new impulse and the justification for escalation. Hence it is the unconditional rule of calculating reason which belongs to the will to power, and not the fog and confusion of an opaque chaos of life. The misled Wagnerian cult imposed an artistic aura on Nietzsche's thinking and its presentation, which, after the process of the scorn of philosophy (that is, Hegel's and Schelling's) through Schopenhauer, and after Schopenhauer's superficial interpretation of Plato and Kant, prepared the last decades of the nineteenth century for an enthusiasm for which the superficial and foggy element of ahistoricity automatically serves as a characteristic of what is true.

Behind all this, however, lies the singular incapacity of thinking in terms of the being of metaphysics and recognizing the scope of truth's essential transformation and the historical sense of the awakening predominance of truth as certainty. Behind it, too, lies the incapacity of

thinking Nietzsche's metaphysics in its relation to the simple paths of modern metaphysics in terms of this knowledge, instead of making a literary phenomenon out of it which rather overheats our brains than purifies, and makes us pause, and perhaps even frightens us. Finally, Nietzsche's passion for creators betrays the fact that he thinks of the genius and the geniuslike only in a modern way, and at the same time technologically from the viewpoint of accomplishment. The two constitutive "values" (truth and art) in the concept of the will to power are only circumscriptions for "technology," in the essential sense of a planning and calculating stabilization as accomplishment, and for the creating of the "creators" who bring a new stimulus to life over and above life as it is, and guarantee the business of culture.

All of this remains in the service of the will to power, but it also prevents the will to power's being from entering the clear light of the broad, essential knowing which can only have its origin in the thinking of the history of Being.

The being of the will to power can only be understood in terms of the will to will. The will to will, however, can only be experienced when metaphysics has already entered its transition.

XII

Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power is prefigured in the sentence: "The Greek knew and sensed the terrors and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all, he had to set up the radiant dream-creation of Olympus above them" (*Socrates and Greek Tragedy*, chapter 3, 1871; the original version of *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, Munich, 1933).

The opposition of the "titanic" and the "barbaric," of the "wild" and the "impulsive" is put here on *one* side, and beautiful, sublime appearance on the *other*.

Although it is not yet clearly thought out and differentiated and seen from a unified perspective, the idea is prefigured here that the "will" needs *at the same time* the guarantee of stability and escalation. But the fact that will is will to power still remains concealed. Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will dominates Nietzsche's thinking at first. The preface to the work is written "on Schopenhauer's birthday."

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With Nietzsche's metaphysics, philosophy is completed. That means: it has gone through the sphere of prefigured possibilities. Completed metaphysics, which is the ground for the planetary manner of thinking, gives the scaffolding for an order of the earth which will supposedly last for a long time. The order no longer needs philosophy because philosophy is already its foundation. But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning.

XIII

In the notes to the fourth part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes (1886): "*We are attempting a venture with truth!*" Perhaps humanity will perish by it! So be it!" (WW XII, p. 307).

An entry written at the time of *The Dawn of Day* (1880–81) reads: "What is new about our present position with regard to philosophy is the conviction which no age has ever yet had: *that we do not have the truth*. All men of earlier times 'had the truth'—even the skeptics" (WW XI, p. 268).

What does Nietzsche mean when he speaks now and then of "the truth"? Does he mean "what is true," and does he think this as what truly is, or as what is valid in all judgments, behavior, and life?

What does this mean: to attempt a venture with the truth? Does it mean: to bring the will to power into relation with the eternal recurrence of the same as what truly is?

Does this thinking ever get to the question as to *wherein* the *essential being* of truth consists and *whence* the truth of this *essential being* occurs?

XIV

How does objectivity come to have the character of constituting the essential being of beings as such?

One thinks "Being" as objectivity, and then tries to get to "what is in itself." But one only forgets to ask and to say what one means here by "what is" and by "in itself."

What "is" Being? May we inquire into "Being" as to *what it is*? Being remains unquestioned and a matter of course, and thus unthought. It

holds itself in a truth which has long since been forgotten and is without ground.

XV

There can be an object in the sense of ob-ject only where man becomes a subject, where the subject becomes the ego and the ego becomes the *ego cogito*, only where this *cogitare* is conceived in its essence as the “original synthetic unity of transcendental apperception,” only where the apex for “logic” is attained (in truth as the certainty of the “I think”). Here the being of the object first reveals itself in its objectivity. Here it first becomes possible and, as a consequence, unavoidable to understand objectivity itself as “the new true object” and to think it unconditionally.

XVI

Subjectivity, object, and reflection belong together. Only when reflection as such is experienced, namely, as the supporting relation to beings, only then can Being be determined as objectivity.

The experience of reflection as this relation, however, presupposes that the relation to beings is experienced as *repraesentatio* in general: as re-presentation.

But this can become a matter of destiny only when the *idea* has become *perceptio*. The transformation of truth as correspondence to truth as certainty, in which the *adaequatio* remains preserved, underlies this change. Certainty as self-guaranteeing (willing-oneself) is *iustitia* as the justification of the relation to beings and of their first cause, and thus of the belongingness to beings. *Iustificatio* in the sense of the Reformation and Nietzsche's concept of justice as truth are the same thing.

Essentially, *repraesentatio* is grounded in *reflexio*. For this reason, the being of objectivity as such first becomes evident where the being of thinking is recognized as explicitly brought about as “I think something,” that is, as reflection.

XVII

Kant is on the way to thinking the being of reflection in the transcendental, that is, in the ontological sense. This occurs in the form of a hardly noticeable side remark in the *Critique of Pure Reason* under the title "On the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection." The section is a supplement, but it is filled with essential insight and critical dialogue with Leibniz, and thus with all previous metaphysics, as Kant himself sees it and as it is grounded in its ontological constitution in egoity.

XVIII

Regarded from the outside, it looks as if egoity were only the retroactive generalization and abstraction of what is egolike from the individual "egos" of man. Descartes above all obviously thinks of his own "ego" as the individual person (*res cogitans* as *substantia finita*). Kant, on the other hand, thinks "consciousness in general." But Descartes also already thinks his own individual ego in the light of egoity which, however, is not yet explicitly represented. This egoity already appears in the form of the *certum*, the certainty which is nothing other than the guaranteeing of what is represented for representational thinking. The hidden relation to egoity as the certainty of itself and of what is represented is already dominant. The individual ego can be experienced as such only in terms of this relation. The human ego as the individual self completing itself can only will itself in the light of the *relation* of the will to will, as yet unknown, to this ego. No ego is there "in itself," but rather is "in itself" always only as appearing "within itself," that is, as egoity.

For this reason, egoity is also present where the individual ego by no means presses forward, where it rather retreats, and society and other communal forms rule. There, too, and precisely there, we find the pure dominance of "egoity" which must be thought metaphysically, and which has nothing to do with naively thought "solipsism."

Philosophy in the age of completed metaphysics is anthropology (cf. *Holzwege*, p. 91f.). Whether or not one says "philosophical" anthropology makes no difference. In the meantime philosophy has become anthropology and in this way a prey to the derivatives of metaphysics, that is, of physics in the broadest sense, which includes the physics of life and

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man, biology and psychology. Having become anthropology, philosophy itself perishes of metaphysics.

XIX

The will to will presupposes as the condition of its possibility the guarantee of stability (truth) and the possibility of exaggerating drives (art). Accordingly, the will to will arranges even beings as Being. In the will to will, technology (guarantee of stability) and the unconditional lack of reflection ("experience") first come to dominance.

Technology as the highest form of rational consciousness, technologically interpreted, and the lack of reflection as the arranged powerlessness, opaque to itself, to attain a relation to what is worthy of question, belong together: they are the same thing.

We are presupposing that why this is so and how it came to this has been experienced and understood.

We only want to consider the fact that anthropology is not exhausted by the study of man and by the will to explain everything in terms of man as his expression. Even where nothing is studied, where rather decisions are sought, this occurs in such a manner that one kind of humanity is previously pitted against another, humanity is acknowledged as the original force, just as if it were the first and last element in all beings, and beings and their actual interpretation were only the consequence.

Thus the solely decisive question comes to predominance: to what form does man belong? "Form" is thought here in an indefinite metaphysical way, that is, Platonically as what is and first determines all tradition and development, itself, however, remaining independent of this. This anticipatory acknowledgment of "man" leads to searching for Being first of all and only in man's environment, and to regarding man himself as human stability, as the actual *me on* to the *idea*.

XX

In that the will to power attains its most extreme, unconditional guarantee, it is the sole criterion that guarantees everything, and thus what is correct. The correctness of the will to will is the unconditional and

complete guaranteeing of itself. What is in accordance with its will is correct and in order, because the will to will itself is the only order. In this self-guaranteeing of the will to will, the primal being of truth is lost. The correctness of the will to will is what is absolutely untrue. The correctness of the untrue has its own irresistibility in the scope of the will to will. But the correctness of the untrue which remains concealed *as such* is at the same time the most uncanny thing that can occur in the distortion of the being of truth. What is correct masters what is true and sets truth aside. The will to unconditional guaranteeing first causes ubiquitous uncertainty to appear.

XXI

The will is in itself already the accomplishment of striving as the realization of what is striven for. What is striven for is explicitly known and consciously posited in the concept, that is, as something represented in general. Consciousness belongs to the will. The will to will is the highest and unconditional consciousness of the calculating self-guaranteeing of calculation (cf. *The Will to Power*, no. 458).

Hence there belongs to it the ubiquitous, continual, unconditional investigation of means, grounds, hindrances, the miscalculating exchange and plotting of goals, deceptiveness and maneuvers, the inquisitorial, as a consequence of which the will to will is distrustful and devious toward itself, and thinks of nothing else than the guaranteeing of itself as power itself.

The aimlessness, indeed the essential aimlessness of the unconditional will to will, is the completion of the being of will which was incipient in Kant's concept of practical reason as pure will. Pure will wills itself, and as the will is Being. Viewed from the perspective of content, pure will and its law are thus formal. Pure will is the sole content for itself as form.

XXII

In virtue of the fact that the will is sometimes personified in individual "men of will," it looks as if the will to will were the radiation of these persons. The opinion arises that the human will is the origin of the will

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to will, whereas man is willed by the will to will without experiencing the essence of this willing.

In that man is what is thus willed and what is posited in the will to will, "the will" is also of necessity addressed in its essence and released as the instance of truth. The question is whether the individuals and communities are in virtue of this will, or whether they still deal and barter with this will or even against it without knowing that they are already outwitted by it. The uniqueness of Being shows itself in the will to will, too, which only admits one direction in which to will. The uniformity of the world of the will to will stems from this, a uniformity which is as far removed from the simplicity of what is original, as deformation of essence from essence, although the former belongs to the latter.

XXIII

Because the will to will absolutely denies every goal and only admits goals as means to outwit itself willfully and to make room for this game; because, however, the will to will nevertheless may not appear as the anarchy of catastrophes that it really is, if it wants to assert itself in beings; it still must legitimate itself. The will to will invents here the talk about "mission." Mission is not thought with regard to anything original and its preservation, but rather as the goal which is assigned from the standpoint of "fate," thus justifying the will to will.

XXIV

The struggle between those who are in power and those who want to come to power: on every side there is the struggle for power. Everywhere power itself is what is determinative. Through this struggle for power, the being of power is posited in the being of its unconditional dominance by both sides. At the same time, however, one thing is still covered up here: the fact that this struggle is in the service of power and is willed by it. Power has overpowered these struggles in advance. The will to will alone empowers these struggles. Power, however, overpowers various kinds of humanity in such a way that it expropriates from man the

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possibility of ever escaping from the oblivion of Being on such paths. This struggle is of necessity planetary and as such undecidable in its being because it has nothing to decide, since it remains excluded from all differentiation, from the difference (of Being from beings), and thus from truth. Through its own force it is driven out into what is without destiny: into the abandonment of Being.

XXV

The pain which must first be experienced and borne out to the end is the insight and the knowledge that lack of need is the highest and most hidden need which first necessitates in virtue of the most distant distance. Lack of need consists in believing that one has reality and what is real in one's grip and knows what truth is, without needing to know in what truth *presences*.

The essence of the history of Being of nihilism is the abandonment of Being in that in it there occurs the self-release of Being into machination. This release takes man into unconditional service. It is by no means a decline and something "negative" in any kind of sense.

Hence not just any kind of humanity is suited to bring about unconditional nihilism in a historical manner. Hence a struggle is even necessary about the decision as to which kind of humanity is capable of the unconditional completion of nihilism.

XXVI

The signs of the ultimate abandonment of Being are the cries about "ideas" and "values," the indiscriminate back and forth of the proclamation of "deeds," and the indispensability of "spirit." All of this is already hitched into the armament mechanism of the plan. The plan itself is determined by the vacuum of the abandonment of Being within which the consumption of beings for the manufacturing of technology, to which culture also belongs, is the only way out for man who is engrossed with still saving subjectivity in superhumanity. Subhumanity and superhumanity are the same thing. They belong together, just as the "below" of animality and the "above" of the *ratio* are indissolubly

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coupled in correspondence in the metaphysical *animal rationale*. Sub- and superhumanity are to be thought here metaphysically, not as moral value judgments.

The consumption of beings is such and in its course determined by armament in the metaphysical sense, through which man makes himself the "master" of what is "elemental." The consumption includes the ordered use of beings which become the opportunity and the material for feats and their escalation. This use is employed for the utility of armaments. In that in the unconditionality of escalation and of self-guaranteeing armament runs out and in truth has aimlessness as its aim, the using is a using up.

The "world wars" and their character of "totality" are already a consequence of the abandonment of Being. They press toward a guarantee of the stability of a constant form of using things up. Man, who no longer conceals his character of being the most important raw material, is also drawn into this process. Man is the "most important raw material" because he remains the subject of all consumption. He does this in such a way that he lets his will be unconditionally equated with this process, and thus at the same time become the "object" of the abandonment of Being. The world wars are the antecedent form of the removal of the difference between war and peace. This removal is necessary since the "world" has become an unworld as a consequence of the abandonment of beings by Being's truth. For "world" in the sense of the history of Being (cf. *Being and Time*) means the nonobjective presencing of the truth of Being for man in that man is essentially delivered over to Being. In the age of the exclusive power of power, that is, of the unconditional pressing of beings toward being used up in consumption, the world has become an unworld in that Being does presence, but without really reigning. As what is real, beings are real. There are effects everywhere, and nowhere is there a worlding of the world and yet, although forgotten, there is still Being. Beyond war and peace, there is the mere erring of the consumption of beings in the plan's self-guaranteeing in terms of the vacuum of the abandonment of Being. Changed into their deformation of essence, "war" and "peace" are taken up into erring, and disappear into the mere course of the escalating manufacture of what can be manufactured, because they have become unrecognizable with regard to any distinction. The question of when there will be peace cannot be answered not because the duration of war is unfathomable, but rather

because the question already asks about something which no longer exists, since war is no longer anything which could terminate in peace. War has become a distortion of the consumption of beings which is continued in peace. Contending with a long war is only the already outdated form in which what is new about the age of consumption is acknowledged. This long war in its length slowly eventuated not in a peace of the traditional kind, but rather in a condition in which warlike characteristics are no longer experienced as such at all and peaceful characteristics have become meaningless and without content. Erring knows no truth of Being. Instead, it develops the completely equipped plan and certainty of all plans whatsoever in every area. In the encompassment (circle) of areas, the particular realms of human equipment necessarily become "sectors"; the "sector" of poetry, the "sector" of culture are also only the areas, guaranteed according to plan, of actual "leadership" along with others. The moral outrage of those who do not yet know what is going on is often aimed at the arbitrariness and the claim to dominance of the "leaders"—the most fatal form of continual valuation. The leader is the source of anger who cannot escape the persecution of anger which they only appear to enact, since they are not the acting ones. One believes that the leaders had presumed everything of their own accord in the blind rage of a selfish egotism and arranged everything in accordance with their own will. In truth, however, they are the necessary consequence of the fact that beings have entered the way of erring in which the vacuum expands which requires a single order and guarantee of beings. Herein the necessity of "leadership," that is, the planning calculation of the guarantee of the whole of beings, is required. For this purpose such men must be organized and equipped who serve leadership. The "leaders" are the decisive suppliers who oversee all the sectors of the consumption of beings because they understand the whole of those sectors and thus master erring in its calculability. The manner of understanding is the ability to calculate which has totally released itself in advance into the demands of the constantly increasing guarantee of plans in the service of the nearest possibilities of plans. The adjustment of all possible strivings to the whole of planning and guaranteeing is called "instinct." The word here designates the "intellect" which transcends the limited understanding that only calculates in terms of what lies closest. Nothing which must go into the calculation of the miscalculating of individual "sectors" as a "factor" escapes the "intellect."

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tualism" of this intellect. Instinct is the superescalation to the unconditional miscalculation of everything. It corresponds to superhumanity. Since this miscalculation absolutely dominates the will, there does not seem to be anything more besides the will than the safety of the mere drive for calculation, for which calculation is above all the first calculative rule. Until now, "instinct" was supposed to be a prerogative of the animal which seeks and follows what is useful and harmful to it in its life sphere, and strives for nothing beyond that. The assurance of animal instinct corresponds to the blind entanglement in its sphere of use. The complete release of subhumanity corresponds to the conditionless empowering of superhumanity. The drive of animality and the *ratio* of humanity become identical.

The fact that instinct is required for superhumanity as a characteristic means that, understood metaphysically, subhumanity belongs to superhumanity, but in such a way that precisely the animal element is thoroughly subjugated in each of its forms to calculation and planning (health plans, breeding). Since man is the most important raw material, one can reckon with the fact that some day factories will be built for the artificial breeding of human material, based on present-day chemical research. The research of the chemist Kuhn, who was awarded the Goethe prize of the city of Frankfurt, already opens up the possibility of directing the breeding of male and female organisms according to plan and need. The way in which artificial insemination is handled correspond with stark consistency to the way in which literature is handled in the sector of "culture." (Let us not flee because of antiquated prudery to distinctions that no longer exist. The need for human material underlies the same regulation of preparing for ordered mobilization as the need for entertaining books and poems, for whose production the poet is no more important than the bookbinder's apprentice, who helps bind the poems for the printer by, for example, bringing the covers for binding from the storage room.)

The consumption of all materials, including the raw material "man," for the unconditional possibility of the production of everything is determined in a concealed way by the complete emptiness in which beings, the materials of what is real, are suspended. This emptiness has to be filled up. But since the emptiness of Being can never be filled up by the fullness of beings, especially when this emptiness can never be experi-

enced as such, the only way to escape it is incessantly to arrange beings in the constant possibility of being ordered as the form of guaranteeing aimless activity. Viewed in this way, technology is the organization of a lack, since it is related to the emptiness of Being contrary to its knowledge. Everywhere where there are not enough beings—and it is increasingly everywhere and always not enough for the will to will escalating itself—technology has to jump in, create a substitute, and consume the raw materials. But in truth the “substitute” and the mass production of ersatz things is not a temporary device, but the only possible form in which the will to will, the “all-inclusive” guarantee of the planning of order, keeps itself going and can thus be “itself” as the “subject” of everything. The increase in the number of masses of human beings is done explicitly by plan so that the opportunity will never run out for claiming more “room to live” for the large masses whose size then again requires correspondingly higher masses of human beings for their arrangement. This circularity of consumption for the sake of consumption is the sole procedure which distinctively characterizes the history of a world which has become an unworld. “Leader natures” are those who allow themselves to be put in the service of this procedure as its directive organs on account of their assured instinct. They are the first employees within the course of business of the unconditional consumption of beings in the service of the guarantee of the vacuum of the abandonment of Being. This course of business of the consumption of beings in virtue of the unknowing defense against unexperienced Being excludes in advance the distinctions between nations and countries as still being essential determinative factors. Just as the distinction between war and peace has become untenable, the distinction between “national” and “international” has also collapsed. Whoever thinks in “a European way” today, no longer allows himself to be exposed to the reproach of being an “internationalist.” But he is also no longer a nationalist, since he thinks no less about the well-being of the other nations than about his own.

Nor does the uniformity of the course of history of our present age consist in a supplementary assimilation of older political systems to the latest ones. Uniformity is not the consequence, but the ground of the warlike disputes of individual intendants of the decisive leadership within the consumption of beings for the sake of securing order. The uniformity of beings arising from the emptiness of the abandonment of Being, in

which it is only a matter of the calculable security of its order which it subjugates to the will to will, also conditions everywhere in advance of all national differences the uniformity of leadership, for which all forms of government are only one instrument of leadership among others. Since reality consists in the uniformity of calculable reckoning, man, too, must enter monotonous uniformity in order to keep up with what is real. A man without a uni-form today already gives the impression of being something unreal which no longer belongs. Beings, which alone are admitted to the will to will, expand in a lack of differentiation which is only masked by a procedure and arrangement which stands under the "principle of production." This seems to have as a consequence an order of rank; whereas in truth it has as its determining ground the lack of rank, since the goal of production is everywhere only the uniform vacuity of the consumption of all work in the security of order. The lack of differentiation, which erupts glaringly from this principle, is by no means the same as the mere leveling down, which is only the disintegration of previous orders of rank. The lack of differentiation of total consumption arises from a "positive" refusal of an order of rank in accordance with the guardianship of the emptiness of all goal-positing. This lack of differentiation bears witness to the already guaranteed constancy of the unworld of the abandonment of Being. The earth appears as the unworld of erring. It is the erring star in the manner of the history of Being.

XXVII

Shepherds live invisibly and outside of the desert of the desolated earth, which is only supposed to be of use for the guarantee of the dominance of man whose effects are limited to judging whether something is important or unimportant for life. As the will to will, this life demands in advance that all knowledge move in the manner of guaranteeing calculation and valuation.

The unnoticeable law of the earth preserves the earth in the sufficiency of the emerging and perishing of all things in the allotted sphere of the possible which everything follows, and yet nothing knows. The birch tree never oversteps its possibility. The colony of bees dwells in its possibility. It is first the will which arranges itself everywhere in technol-

ogy that devours the earth in the exhaustion and consumption and change of what is artificial. Technology drives the earth beyond the developed sphere of its possibility into such things which are no longer a possibility and are thus the impossible. The fact that technological plans and measures succeed a great deal in inventions and novelties, piling upon each other, by no means yields the proof that the conquests of technology even make the impossible possible.

The realism and moralism of chronicle history are the last steps of the completed identification of nature and spirit with the being of technology. Nature and spirit are objects of self-consciousness. The unconditional dominance of self-consciousness forces both in advance into a uniformity out of which there is metaphysically no escape.

It is one thing just to use the earth, another to receive the blessing of the earth and to become at home in the law of this reception in order to shepherd the mystery of Being and watch over the inviolability of the possible.

XXVIII

No mere action will change the world, because Being as effectiveness and effecting closes all beings off in the face of Appropriation. Even the immense suffering which surrounds the earth is unable to waken a transformation, because it is only experienced as suffering, as passive, and thus as the opposite state of action, and thus experienced together with action in the same realm of being of the will to will.

But the earth remains preserved in the inconspicuous law of the possible which it is. The will has forced the impossible as a goal upon the possible. Machination, which orders this compulsion and holds it in dominance, arises from the being of technology, the word here made equivalent to the concept of metaphysics completing itself. The unconditional uniformity of all kinds of humanity of the earth under the rule of the will to will makes clear the meaninglessness of human action which has been posited absolutely.

The desolation of the earth begins as a process which is willed, but not known in its being, and also not knowable at the time when the being of truth defines itself as certainty in which human representational thinking and producing first become sure of themselves. Hegel conceives

this moment of the history of metaphysics as the moment in which absolute self-consciousness becomes the principle of thinking.

It almost seems as if the being of pain were cut off from man under the dominance of the will, similarly the being of joy. Can the extreme measure of suffering still bring a transformation here?

No transformation comes without an anticipatory escort. But how does an escort draw near unless Appropriation opens out which, calling, needing, envisions human being, that is, sees and in this seeing brings mortals to the path of thinking, poetizing building.

Translated by Joan Stambaugh

“ONLY A GOD CAN SAVE US”: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview with Martin Heidegger

Introductory Note in *Der Spiegel*

Der Spiegel’s interview with Martin Heidegger, which appears in this issue, was forbidden to be made known until after his death. This was the strict wish of the philosopher. Born in Messkirch on September 26, 1889, and without doubt one of the most important existentialists in Germany, indeed one of the most important existentialists internationally, Heidegger died this past Wednesday in Freiburg. By way of background, let us mention that in March 1966 Heidegger sent a letter to the editor of *Der Spiegel* in which he contradicted some of the statements which are found in the literature about his behavior during the Third Reich. After twenty years of silence on the subject, this was unique for him. This letter to the editor was at the same time a subtle hint to *Der Spiegel* that Heidegger was ready to address himself to these reproaches. In September 1966, Rudolph Augstein and Georg Folff conducted *Der Spiegel*’s interview with Heidegger, the topic of which soon passed far beyond the year 1933. Heidegger resolutely resisted any suggestion to publish the interview before his death: “It is neither pride nor stubbornness, but rather sheer care for my work, whose task has become with the years more and more simple and in the field of thinking that means more and more difficult.”

“Only a God Can Save Us” (“Nur ein Gott kann uns noch retten”) first appeared in *Der Spiegel*, May 31, 1976. The present translation by Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo appeared in *Philosophy Today* XX(4/4):267–285, 1976. The editor gratefully acknowledges permission from *Philosophy Today* to reprint.

Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger on September 23, 1966

Spiegel: Professor Heidegger, we have stated time and again that your philosophical work has been somewhat overshadowed by some events in your life which, while they did not last very long, have still never been cleared up.

Heidegger: You mean 1933.

S: Yes, before and after. We would like to put this in a larger context and, from that vantage point, raise some questions which appear to be important, e.g., what are the possibilities that philosophy could have an effect on reality, in particular on political reality?

H: These are important questions. Who is to say that I can answer them? But first of all I must say that, before my rectorship, I was not in any way politically active. In the winter semester of 1932–33, I had a leave of absence, and I spent most of that time at my cabin.

S: Well, then how did it happen that you became rector of the University of Freiburg?

H: In December 1932, my neighbor, von Möllendorff, who was Professor of Anatomy, was elected rector. The term of office of the new rector at the University of Freiburg begins on April 15. During the winter semester of 1932–33, he and I often spoke of the situation, not only of the political situation, but especially of that of the universities, and of the situation of the students which appeared in part to be hopeless. My judgment was this: insofar as I could judge things, only one possibility was left, and that was to attempt to stem the coming development by means of constructive powers which were still viable.

S: So you saw a connection between the situation of the German university and the political situation in Germany as a whole?

H: I certainly followed political events between January and March 1933 and occasionally I spoke about them with my younger colleagues. But my work itself was concerned with a comprehensive interpretation of pre-Socratic thought. At the beginning of the summer semester I returned to Freiburg. In the meantime, on April 16, Professor von Möllendorff had begun his office as rector. Scarcely two weeks later he was relieved of his office by the then Badish Minister of Culture. The occasion for this decision by the minister, an occasion for which the minister was presumably looking, was the fact that the rector had forbidden posting the so-called Jewish proclamation.

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S: Professor von Möllendorff was a Social Democrat. What did he do after his removal?

H: On the very day he was removed, von Möllendorff came to me and said: "Heidegger, now you must take over the rectorship." I said that I lacked experience in administration. The vice-rector at that time, Professor Sauer (Theology), likewise urged me to become a candidate for the rectorship. For otherwise the danger would be that a party functionary would be named rector. The younger faculty, with whom I had been discussing the structure of the University for many years, besieged me to take over the rectorship. For a long time I hesitated. Finally I said that I was ready to take over the office in the interest of the University, but only if I could be certain of a unanimous agreement of the Plenum. My doubts about my suitability for the rectorship persisted. On the morning of the day which had been set for the election, I went to the rector's office and explained to von Möllendorff (who though no longer rector was present there) and to Professor Sauer, that I just could not possibly take over the office. Both these colleagues told me that the election had been set up in such a way that I could no longer withdraw my candidacy.

S: And after this you declared yourself ready. How then was your relationship with the National Socialists formed?

H: On the second day after I had assumed office, the "student leader" with two companions visited me as rector and demanded again the posting of the Jewish proclamation. I declined. The three students left remarking that the prohibition would be reported to the National Student Leadership. After a few days a telephone call came from the Office of Higher Education [SA *Hochschulamt*], in the highest SA echelons, from the SA Leader Dr. Baumann.* He demanded the posting of the so-called proclamation, since it had already been posted in other universities. If I refused I would have to reckon with removal, if not, indeed, with the closing of the University. I attempted to win the support of the Badish Minister of Culture for my prohibition. The latter explained that he could do nothing in opposition to the SA. Nevertheless, I did not retract my prohibition.

S: Up to now that was not known.

H: The motive which moved me to take over the rectorship had

* Translators' note: *Sturm Abteilung*, or Storm Troop.

already appeared in my inaugural address at Freiburg in the year 1929, *What is Metaphysics?*: "The fields of the sciences lie far apart. The methods of treating their objects are fundamentally different. Today this fragmented multiplicity of discipline is held together only by the technical organization of the universities and the faculties and held together as a unit of meaning only through the practical orientation of the academic departments. The roots of the sciences in their essential ground have withered away."* What I attempted to do during my term of office with respect to this situation of the university (which has by today deteriorated to the extreme) is contained in my rectoral address.†

S: We attempted to find out how and whether this remark from 1929 coincided with what you said in your inaugural address as rector in 1933. We are taking a sentence out of context. "The much-sung 'academic freedom' is driven out of the German university. This freedom was false because it was only negative." We might suppose that this sentence expresses at least in part ideas which are even today not foreign to you.

H: Yes, I still stand behind that statement. For this academic "freedom" was all too often only a negative one: freedom *from* taking the trouble to reflect and meditate as scientific studies demand. But the sentence which you have picked out should not be isolated. It should, rather, be read in context. Then what I wanted understood by "negative freedom" will become clear.

S: Good. One can understand that. Still we believe that we perceive a new tone in your rector's address when you speak there, four months after Hitler was named Chancellor of the Reich, of the "greatness and glory of this new dawn."

H: Yes, I was convinced of that.

S: Could you explain that a bit more?

H: Gladly. At that time I saw no alternative. In the general confusion of opinions and of the political trends of 22 parties, it was necessary to

* Translators' note: Martin Heidegger, "Was ist Metaphysik?" 9. Aufl. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965), pp. 24–25; English translation: "What is Metaphysics?" translated by R. F. C. Hull and A. Crick in *Existence and Being*, edited by W. Brock (London: Vision Press, 1956), p. 356. With the exception of this passage, we have used the existing English translations of the works of Heidegger referred to in the interview.

† Translators' note: Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* (Breslau: Korn, 1933).

find a national, and above all a social, point of view, perhaps of the sort attempted by Friedrich Naumann. To give you one example, I can only refer you here to an essay by Eduard Spranger, which goes far beyond my rector's address.*

S: When did you begin to be concerned with political situations? The 22 parties had been there for a long time. And there were millions of unemployed people in 1930.

H: At that time I was completely taken up with the questions that are developed in *Being and Time* (1927) and in the writings and lectures of the following years. These are the fundamental questions of thinking which in an indirect way affect even national and social questions. The question which concerned me directly as a teacher in the university was the question of the meaning of the sciences and, in connection with this, the question of the determination of the task of the university. This concern is expressed in the title of my rectoral address: "The Self-Assertion of the German University." Such a title had not been risked in any rectoral address up to that time. And yet who among those who have engaged in polemics against this address has read it thoroughly, thought it through and interpreted it in terms of the situation of those times?

S: But to speak of the self-assertion of the German university in such a turbulent world, wasn't that a bit inappropriate?

H: Why so? The self-assertion of the university: that goes against the so-called "political science" which was demanded at that time in the Party and by the National Socialist Students. At that time the title had a completely different meaning: it did not mean the science of politics, as it does today; rather it meant: science as such in the meaning and worth, is devalued in favor of the practical needs of the people. The counterposition to such politicizing of science is rightly expressed in the rectoral address.

S: Do we understand you correctly? While you drew the university into something which you at that time felt to be a new dawn, still you wished to see the university assert itself against currents which were overpowering and which would have no longer allowed the university to keep its identity?

* Translators' note: This essay appeared in a periodical, *Die Erziehung*, edited by A. Fischer, W. Flitner, H. Nohl, and E. Spranger, 1933, p. 401.

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H: Certainly. But self-assertion should simultaneously pose the task of retrieving from the merely technical organization of the university a new meaning which could come out of a reflection on the tradition of Western European thought.

S: Professor, are we to understand that you thought at that time that it was possible for the university to regain its health in alliance with the National Socialists?

H: That is not exactly correct. I did not say in alliance with the National Socialists. Rather, the university should renew itself by means of its own reflection and in this way secure a firm position against the danger of the politicization of science—in the aforementioned sense.

S: And that is why you proclaimed these three pillars in your rectoral address: the service of work, military service, and the service of knowledge. In this way you meant to say, the “service of knowledge” should be lifted up to a position of equal rank with the other two, something which the National Socialists surely would not have granted it?

H: There was no talk of “pillars.” If you read it carefully, you will see that the “service of knowledge” does, to be sure, stand in the third place in the enumeration, but in terms of its meaning it is first. One ought to remember that work and the military, like every human activity, are grounded in knowledge and are enlightened by it.

S: But we must—and this will be the end of this miserable quoting—still mention one more remark, one which we cannot imagine that you would still subscribe to today. You said in the fall of 1933: “Do not let doctrines and ideas be the rules of your Being. The Führer himself and he alone *is* the present and future German reality and its rule.”

H: These sentences are not found in the rectoral address, but only in the local *Freiburg Students Newspaper*, at the beginning of the 1933–34 winter semester. When I took over the rectorship it was clear to me that I would not see it through without some compromises. I would today no longer write the sentences which you cite. Even by 1934 I no longer said such things.

S: May we ask you once more a related question? It has become clear up to this point in this conversation that your position in the year 1933 fluctuated between two poles. You had to say many things *ad usum delphini* [for the use of the Dauphin, i.e., for public consumption]; that is one pole. But the other pole was more positive, and this you express

by saying: I had the feeling that here is something new, here is a new dawn.

H: That is right. It's not that I had spoken only for the sake of appearances; I also saw such a possibility.

S: You know that some reproaches have been made against you in this connection concerning your collaboration with the NSDAP* and its units and which are still not contradicted. Thus you have been accused of having taken part in the book burnings by the student body or by the Hitler Youth.

H: I had forbidden the planned book burning which was to take place in front of the University buildings.

S: Then you were also accused of having had the books of Jewish authors removed from the library or from the Philosophical Seminar.

H: As Director of the Seminar I had authority only over its library. I did not comply with the repeated demands to remove the books of Jewish authors. Former participants in my seminars could testify today that not only were no books of Jewish authors removed, but that these authors, and above all Husserl, were cited and discussed just as before 1933.

S: Well, then how do you explain the origin of such rumors? Is it just maliciousness?

H: According to my knowledge of the sources, I am inclined to believe that. But the motives of the defamation lie deeper. Taking over the rectorship was probably only the occasion, but not the determining cause. Probably the polemics will flare up again and again, whenever the occasion presents itself.

S: You had Jewish students also after 1933. Your relationship to some of these students is supposed to have been quite warm.

H: My attitude after 1933 remained unchanged. One of my oldest and most gifted students, Helene Weiss, who later emigrated to Scotland, was awarded her doctorate from Basel—for this was no longer possible at Freiburg—with a dissertation, "Causality and Chance in the Philosophy of Aristotle," printed in Basel in 1942. At the conclusion of the foreword, the author writes: "The attempt at a phenomenological interpretation, which we here submit in its preliminary stage, was made

*Translators' note: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (the National Socialists or "Nazis").

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possible by M. Heidegger's unpublished interpretations of Greek philosophy." I have here a copy of the book with a dedication by the author in her own handwriting. I visited Dr. Weiss several times in Brussels before her death.

S: You and Jaspers were friends for a long time. Then after 1933 this relationship became clouded. The story goes that the problem was that Jaspers had a Jewish wife. Would you comment on that?

H: Karl Jaspers and I had been friends since 1919. I visited him and his wife in Heidelberg during the summer semester of 1933. Karl Jaspers sent me all his publications between 1934 and 1938, "with warm regards."

S: You were a student of Edmund Husserl, your Jewish predecessor in the Chair of Philosophy at Freiburg University. He had recommended you to the faculty to be his successor as professor. Your relationship with him must have included some gratitude.

H: To be sure. You know the dedication of *Being and Time*.

S: Of course. But later on this relationship too became clouded. Can you and are you willing to tell us what caused this?

H: Our differences with respect to philosophical matters had been accentuated. In the beginning of the 1930s, Husserl settled accounts with Max Scheler and me in public, the clarity of which left nothing to be desired. I could not discover what had moved Husserl to cut himself off from my thought in such a public way.

S: On what occasion was this?

H: Husserl spoke in the Berlin Sports Palace before the student body. Erich Mühsam reported it in one of the large Berlin newspapers.

S: In our context, the actual controversy itself is not of interest. All that is interesting is that there was no controversy which had anything to do with 1933.

H: None in the least.

S: Reproaches were made against you that, in 1941, the year of the publication of the fifth edition of *Being and Time*, you left out the original dedication to Husserl.

H: That's right. I explained this in my book, *On the Way to Language*. I wrote there, "To counter widely circulated allegations, let it be stated here explicitly that the dedication of *Being and Time* mentioned on p. 16 [p. 92 in the German edition of *Unterwegs zur Sprache*] of the

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Dialogue remained in *Being and Time* until its fourth edition of 1935. In 1941, when my publishers felt that the fifth edition might be endangered and that, indeed, the book might be suppressed, I finally agreed, at the suggestion and wish of Niemeyer, that the dedication be omitted from the edition on the condition imposed by me that the note to page 38 [of the German edition of *Being and Time*] be retained—a note which in fact states the reason for that dedication, and which runs: 'If the following investigation has taken any steps forward in disclosing the "things themselves," the author must first of all thank E. Husserl, who, by providing his own incisive personal guidance and by freely turning over his unpublished investigations, familiarized the author with the most diverse areas of phenomenological research during his student years at Freiburg.'"^{*}

S: Then we hardly need to ask whether it is correct that you, as rector of the University of Freiburg, had forbidden Professor Emeritus Husserl to enter or to use the University Library or the library of the Philosophical Seminar.

H: That is a slander.

S: And there is no letter which contains this prohibition against Husserl? Then how did this rumor get started?

H: I don't know that either. I cannot find an explanation for it. I can show you the impossibility of this whole affair by means of something else which is not known. When I was rector I was able, in a meeting I had with the Minister, to retain the then Director of the Medical Clinic, Professor Thannhauser and also Professor von Hevesy, Professor of Physics, who was later to be a Nobel Prize winner. Both of these men were Jews, whom the Ministry had demanded be removed. Now it is absurd that I would have retained both these men and at the same time have taken the alleged steps against Husserl, who was an emeritus and my own teacher. Moreover, I kept the students and lecturers from organizing a demonstration against Professor Thannhauser. At that time, there were unsalaried lecturers who were stuck without students and who thought: now is the time to be promoted. When they met with me about this, I turned them all down.

^{*}Translators' note: Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), p. 269; English translation: *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 199–200.

S: You did not attend Husserl's funeral in 1938.

H: Let me say the following about that. The reproach that I broke off my relations with Husserl is unfounded. In May 1933, my wife wrote a letter in both our names to Frau Husserl in which we expressed our unaltered gratitude. We sent this letter to Husserl with a bouquet of flowers. Frau Husserl answered tersely in a formal thank you note and wrote that relations between our families were broken off. It was a human failing that [at Husserl's sickbed or at the time of his death] I did not express once more my gratitude and my admiration. And for that I asked Frau Husserl's forgiveness in writing.

S: Husserl died in 1938. By February 1934, you had already resigned the rectorship. How did that come about?

H: I should expand upon that somewhat. I had the intention of doing something about the technical organization of the University, that is, of reforming the faculties from the inside and on the basis of the tasks imposed upon them by their various fields. With this in mind, I proposed to nominate as deans of the individual faculties for the winter semester of 1933–34 younger and, above all, outstanding men, without regard for their position in the Party. Thus deans were appointed as follows: in the Law School, Professor Erich Wolff; in Philosophy, Professor Schädewaldt; in Natural Sciences, Professor Soergel; in Medicine, Professor von Möllendorff, who had been removed as rector in the spring. But by Christmas 1933 it became clear to me that the innovations for the University which I had in mind could not be carried out because of opposition both within the faculty and from the Party. The faculty, for example, took it amiss that I included students in responsible positions in the administration of the University, much as is the case today. One day I was called to Karlsruhe. There the Minister, through his assistant and in the presence of the Nazi student leader, demanded that I replace the deans of the Law School and Medical School by other members of the faculty who would be acceptable to the Party. I refused to do this and tendered my resignation from the rectorship, should the Minister persist in his demands. That is what happened. That was in February 1934. I stepped down after ten months in office, even though rectors at that time remained in office two or more years. While both the foreign and domestic press commented in the most divergent ways about the

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appointment of the new rector, they were silent about my resignation.

S: Did you have the opportunity at that time to present your thoughts about university reform to the Reichs Minister?

H: At what time?

S: One still hears of a trip which Rust made to Freiburg in 1933.

H: We are dealing here with two different episodes. I gave a brief formal greeting to the Minister on the occasion of the Schlageter* celebration in Schönau i.W. Secondly, I spoke with the Minister in November 1933 in Berlin. I presented my views to him on the sciences and the possible structure of the faculties. He listened to everything so attentively, that I had the hope that my presentation would have an effect. But nothing happened. It is beyond me why I should be reproached for this conversation with the then Reichs Minister of Education, while at that very time all foreign governments hastened to recognize Hitler and to show him the customary international courtesies.

S: Did your relationship with the NSDAP change after you resigned as rector?

H: After I stepped down as rector I limited myself to teaching. In the summer semester of 1934 I lectured on "Logic." In the following semester I gave the first Hölderlin lecture. In 1936, I began the Nietzsche lectures. Anyone with ears to hear heard in these lectures a confrontation with National Socialism.

S: How did the transfer of offices take place? You did not participate in the celebration.

H: Right, I did indeed decline to participate in the ceremony of the change of rectors.

S: Was your successor a committed Party member?

H: He was a member of the Law Faculty. The Party newspaper, *Der Alemanne*, announced his appointment as rector with a banner headline: "The First National Socialist Rector of the University."

S: How did the Party act toward you?

H: I was constantly under surveillance.

S: Were you aware of that?

* Translators' note: Albert Leo Schlageter (1894–1923), shot by the French for his role in the resistance to the French occupation in the Ruhr.

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H: Yes—the case with Dr. Hanke [sic].

S: How did you find that out?

H: He came to me himself. He had already received his doctorate [*promoviert*] in the winter semester of 1936–37 and he was a member of my advanced seminar in the summer semester of 1937. He had been sent by the SD* to keep me under surveillance.

S: Why did he suddenly come to you?

H: Because of my Nietzsche seminar in the summer semester of 1937 and because of the way in which the work proceeded in the seminar, he told to me that he could no longer maintain the surveillance which he was assigned to do. And he wanted to make me aware of this situation in view of my future teaching activity.

S: So the Party kept a watchful eye over you?

H: I only knew that my writings were not allowed to be discussed, for example the essay, “Plato’s Theory of Truth.” My Hölderlin lecture, which was given in the spring of 1936 in Rome at the Germanic Institute, was attacked in an insidious way in the Hitler Youth magazine *Wille und Macht* [*Will and Power*]. Those who are interested should read the polemics against me which start in the summer of 1934 in Kriek’s magazine, *Volk im Werden* [*People in Process*]. I was not a delegate from Germany at the International Congress of Philosophy in Prague in 1934. I was also supposed to be excluded from the Descartes Congress in Paris in 1937. This seemed so odd in Paris that the leadership of the Congress there—Professor Bréhier of the Sorbonne—asked me on his own why I was not a part of the German delegation. I answered that the leadership of the Congress could inquire about this at the Reichs Ministry of Education. After some time a request came from Berlin that I should belatedly join the delegation. But I declined. My lectures, *What is Metaphysics?* and *On the Essence of Truth*, were sold there under the counter with a plain dust wrapper. Soon after 1934 the rectoral address was withdrawn from circulation at the instigation of the Party.

S: Did things get worse later on?

H: In the last year of the war, 500 of the most important scholars [*Wissenschaftler*] and artists of every kind were exempted from war

* Translators’ note: *Sicherheitsdiens*t, the Security Service.

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service. I was not among the exempted. On the contrary, in the summer of 1944 I was ordered to work on the fortifications over on the Rhine.

S: Karl Barth worked on the fortifications on the Swiss side.

H: It is interesting how this took place. The rector called together all the faculty [*Dozentenschaft*]. Then he gave a speech to the effect that what he was saying at that time was in agreement with the regional Nazi leaders [*NS-Kreisleiter* and *NS-Gauleiter*]. The entire faculty was to be divided into three groups. First, those who could be dispensed with completely; second, those who could only be partially dispensed with; third, those who were indispensable. The category of completely dispensable people included Heidegger and also G. Ritter.* In the winter semester of 1944–45, after finishing my work on the fortifications on the Rhine, I gave a lecture course with the title "Poetizing and Thinking." This was in a certain sense a continuation of my Nietzsche lectures, that is to say, a confrontation with National Socialism. After the second lecture I was drafted into the *Volkssturm*—the oldest member of the faculty to be called up.†

S: Perhaps we might summarize: in 1933 you were, as an unpolitical man in the strict sense, not in the wider sense, caught up in the politics of this supposed new dawn . . .

H: By way of the university . . .

S: . . . caught up by way of the university in this supposed new dawn. After about a year you gave up the function you had assumed. But in a lecture in 1935, which was published in 1953 as *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, you said, "The works that are being peddled (about) nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism, but have nothing whatever to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely, the encounter between global technology and contemporary man), have

* Translators' note: *Der Spiegel* provides the following note: Professor Gerhard Ritter, at that time full Professor of Modern History in the University of Freiburg, was imprisoned on November 1, 1944 in connection with the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944 and was freed by the allied troops only on April 25, 1945. The historian became professor emeritus in 1956 and died in 1967 (from *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung*).

† Translators' note: "It was in order to utilize the last reserves of his manpower that Hitler had created a new fighting force of hurriedly-trained civilians—the *Volkssturm*—into which all able-bodied males between 16 and 60 were compulsorily drafted" (Richard Grundberger, *Germany 1918–1945* [New York: Harper and Row, 1964], p. 181).

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all been written by men fishing the troubled waters of values and totalities.”* Did you only add the words in parentheses in 1953, that is, with the book’s publication—perhaps in order to explain to the reader of 1953 how you in 1935 saw the inner truth and greatness of this movement, that is, of National Socialism? Or was this parenthetical remark explaining your viewpoint already there in 1935?

H: It was present in my manuscript from the beginning and agreed completely with my conception of technology at that time, though not as yet with the later interpretation of the essence of technology as the “frame” [“*das Ge-Stell*”].† The reason I did not read this passage aloud was that I was convinced that my audience were understanding me correctly. The dumb ones, the spies, and the snoopers wanted to understand me otherwise, and would, no matter what.

S: Certainly you would also have classified the Communist movement that way too?

H: Yes, definitely—as determined by global technology.

S: And also “Americanism”?

H: Yes, I would say that too. Meanwhile, in the past thirty years it should have become clearer that the global movement of modern technology is a force whose scope in determining history can scarcely be overestimated. A decisive question for me today is: how can a political system accommodate itself to the technological age, and which political system would this be? I have no answer to this question. I am not convinced that it is democracy.

S: “Democracy” is a catch-all word under which quite different ideas can be brought together. The question is whether a transformation of this political structure is still possible. After 1945, you addressed yourself to the political aspirations of the Western world and then you spoke also of democracy, of the political expression of the Christian worldview, and even of the idea of a constitutional state—and you have labeled all these aspirations “half truths.”

H: First of all, would you please tell me where I spoke about democ-

* Translators’ note: Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 2. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1958), p. 152; English translation: *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), p. 166.

† Translators’ note: For Joan Stambaugh’s translation of “*Ge-Stell*” as “frame,” see her introduction to Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 14, n. 1.

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racy and all the other things you refer to? I would characterize them as half truths because I do not see in them a genuine confrontation with the technological world, because behind them there is in my view a notion that technology is in its essence something over which man has control. In my opinion, that is not possible. Technology is in its essence something which man cannot master by himself.

S: In your view, which of all these things you have just sketched out is the most timely?

H: That I don't see. But I do see a decisive question here. We must first of all clarify what you mean by "timely," that is, what "time" means. And still more, we must ask whether timeliness is the measure of the "inner truth" of human action, or rather, whether thinking and poetizing are not the activity which gives us the measure, despite the heretical meaning we have given to that term.

S: It is striking that man at no time has been able to master his own tools; I am thinking of "The Magician's Apprentice."^{*} Isn't it then a bit too pessimistic to say that we will not be able to manage this much greater tool of modern technology?

H: Pessimism, no. Pessimism and optimism are attitudes which we are trying to consider, and they do not go far enough. Above all, modern technology is not a tool and it has nothing to do with tools anymore.

S: Why should we be so thoroughly overpowered by technology?

H: I did not say overpowered. I am saying that we still have no way to respond to the essence of technology.

S: One could make the following quite naive rejoinder: what is to be overcome here? Everything is functioning. More and more power plants are being built. We have peak production. Men in the highly technological parts of the world are well provided for. We live in prosperity. What is really missing here?

H: Everything is functioning. This is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning and that the functioning drives us more and more to even further functioning, and that technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them. I do not know whether you were frightened, but I at any rate was frightened when I saw pictures coming from the moon to the earth. We don't need any atom bomb. The

^{*} Translators' note: A poem by Goethe.

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uprooting of man has already taken place. The only thing we have left is purely technological relationships. This is no longer the earth on which man lives. As you know, I recently had a long conversation with René Char of the Provence, the poet and resistance fighter. Rocket bases are being built in the Provence and the country is being devastated in an incredible way. This poet, who certainly cannot be suspected of sentimentality and of glorification of the idyllic, tells me that the uprooting of man which is taking place there will be the end, if poetry and thought do not once more succeed to a position of might without force.

S: We say now that we would rather be here, and of course in our lifetime we will not have to leave. But who knows whether it is the destiny of man to remain on this earth. It is conceivable that man has no destiny at all. But at any rate, one could envisage the possibility that man would reach out from this earth to other planets. That will certainly not be for a long time. But where is it written that man's place is here?

H: According to our human experience and history, at least as far as I see it, I know that everything essential and everything great originated from the fact that man had a home and was rooted in a tradition. Present-day literature, for example, is predominantly destructive.

S: The word "destructive" bothers us, especially since the word "nihilistic," thanks to you and your philosophy, has received an all-encompassing breadth of meaning. It is shocking to hear the word "destructive" in regard to literature, which you could and ought after all to see as completely part and parcel of this nihilism.

H: I would like to say that the literature I have in mind is not nihilistic in the way that I think of nihilism.

S: You obviously envisage, and this is what you have already said, a world movement which either leads up to or has already led up to the absolute technological state.

H: Yes.

S: Good. Now the question naturally comes up: can the individual in any way influence this network of inevitabilities, or could philosophy influence it, or could both together influence it inasmuch as philosophy could guide the individual or several individuals toward a specific action?

H: Let me respond briefly and somewhat ponderously, but from long

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reflection: philosophy will not be able to effect an immediate transformation of the present condition of the world. This is not only true of philosophy, but of all merely human thought and endeavor. Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in the time of foundering [*Untergang*]; for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder.

S: Is there a connection between your thinking and the emergence of this god? Is there in your view a causal connection? Do you think that we can think god into being here with us?

H: We can not think him into being here; we can at most awaken the readiness of expectation.

S: But are we able to help?

H: The preparation of a readiness may be the first step. The world cannot be what it is or the way that it is through man, but neither can it be without man. According to my view, this is connected with the fact that what I name with the word Being, a word which is of long standing, traditional, multifaceted, and worn out, needs man for its revelation, preservation, and formation. I see the essence of technology in what I call the frame [*das Ge-stell*], an expression which has often been laughed at and is perhaps somewhat clumsy. The frame holding sway means: the essence of man is framed, claimed, and challenged by a power which manifests itself in the essence of technology, a power which man himself does not control. To help with this realization is all that one can expect of thought. Philosophy is at an end.

S: In earlier times—and not only in earlier times—it was thought that philosophy effected a great deal indirectly—seldom in a direct way—and that indirectly it could effect a great deal, that it could help new currents to break through. If one only thinks of the Germans, of the great names of Kant, Hegel, up to Nietzsche, not to mention Marx, then it can be shown that philosophy has had, in a roundabout way, a tremendous effect. Do you really think the effectiveness of philosophy has come to an end? And if you say that the old philosophy is dead, no longer exists, does this not include the idea that this effectiveness of philosophy (if indeed there ever were such) today, at least, no longer exists?

H: If one thinks in different terms a mediated effect is possible, but

not a direct one. Hence thinking, as it were, can causally change the situation of the world.

S: Excuse me, we do not want to philosophize. We are not up to that. But we have here touched upon the boundaries between politics and philosophy. So please overlook the fact that we are drawing you into such a conversation. You have just said that philosophy and the individual are capable of nothing other than . . .

H: . . . this preparation of the readiness, of keeping oneself open for the arrival of or the absence of the god. Moreover, the experience of this absence is not nothing, but rather a liberation of man from what I called "fallenness amidst beings" in *Being and Time*. A meditation on what is today belongs to the preparation of the readiness we referred to.

S: But then as a matter of fact the celebrated impetus would have to come from the outside, from a god or whomever. Thus thinking could today no longer be effective of itself and autonomous. But this was the case formerly in the opinion of the people of earlier days and, I believe, in ours too.

H: But not immediately.

S: We have already mentioned Kant, Hegel, and Marx as men who caused a great stir. But there have also been impulses coming from Leibniz—for the development of modern physics and therefore for the origin of the modern world in general. We believe that you have just said that you no longer take such an effect into account today?

H: No longer in the sense of philosophy. The role which philosophy has played up to now has been taken over by the sciences. In order to give an adequate explanation of the "effect" of thought, we must discuss more thoroughly what "effect" and "effecting" can mean. If we have discussed the Principle of Sufficient Reason sufficiently, one ought to make here fundamental distinctions among occasion, impetus, furthering, assistance, obstacle, and cooperation. Philosophy dissolves into the individual sciences: psychology, logic, and political science.

S: And now what or who takes the place of philosophy?

H: Cybernetics.

S: Or the pious one who keeps himself open.

H: But that is no longer philosophy.

S: What is it then?

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H: I call it the "other thinking."

S: You call it the "other thinking." Would you like to formulate that a bit more clearly?

H: Did you have in mind the concluding sentence in my lecture, "The Question of Technology": "Questioning is the piety of thought"?*

S: We found a sentence in your Nietzsche lectures which is enlightening. You said there: "It is because the highest possible bond prevails in philosophical thought that all great thinkers think the same. This sameness, however, is so essential and rich that one individual can never exhaust it, so each only binds himself to the other all the more strictly." But it appears that, in your opinion, just this philosophical edifice has led us to a very definite end.

H: It has come to an end, but it has not become for us null and void; rather it has turned up anew in this conversation. My whole work in lectures and exercises in the past 30 years has been in the main only an interpretation of Western philosophy. The regress into the historical foundations of thought, the thinking through of the questions which are still unasked since the time of Greek philosophy—that is not a cutting loose from the tradition. I am saying: the traditional metaphysical mode of thinking, which terminated with Nietzsche, no longer offers any possibility for experiencing in a thoughtful way the fundamental traits of the technological age, an age which is just beginning.

S: Approximately two years ago, in a conversation with a Buddhist monk, you spoke of "a completely new way of thinking" and you said that "only a few people are capable of" this new way of thought. Did you want to say that only a very few people can have the insights which in your view are possible and necessary?

H: To "have" them in the utterly primordial sense, so that they can, in a certain way, "say" them.

S: But you did not make clear in this conversation with the Buddhist just how this passing over into reality [*Verwirklichung*] takes place.

H: I cannot make this clear. I know nothing about how this thinking "has an effect" [*wirkt*]. It may be that the path of thinking has today reached the point where silence is required to preserve thinking from

* Translators' note: Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), p. 44.

being all jammed up just within a year. It may also be that it will take 300 years for it "to have an effect."

S: We understand that very well. But since we don't live 300 years from now, but here and now, silence is denied to us. We politicians, semi-politicians, citizens, journalists, etc., we constantly have to make decisions of one kind or another. We must try to adapt to the system we live in, we must attempt to change it, we must look for the small opportunity of reform and the still smaller one of revolution. We expect help from the philosopher, if only indirect help, help in a roundabout way. And now we hear: I cannot help you.

H: And I cannot.

S: That surely discourages the non-philosopher.

H: I cannot, because the questions are so difficult that it would be contrary to the meaning of the task of thought to step up publicly, as it were, to preach and to impose moral judgment. Perhaps one might risk the following: to the mystery of the superior global power of the unthought essence of technology there corresponds the tentativeness and inconspicuousness of thought, which attempts to meditate this still unthought essence.

S: You do not number yourself among those who could show a way, if people would only listen to them?

H: No. I know of no paths to the immediate transformation of the present situation of the world, assuming that such a thing is humanly possible at all. But it seems to me that the thinking which I attempt would awaken, clarify, and fortify the readiness which we have mentioned.

S: A clear answer. But can and may a thinker say: just wait and within the next 300 years something will occur to us?

H: It is not a matter simply of waiting until something occurs to man within the next 300 years, but of thinking ahead (without prophetic proclamations) into the time which is to come, of thinking from the standpoint of the fundamental traits of the present age, which have scarcely been thought through. Thinking is not inactivity but is in itself the action which stands in dialogue with the world mission [*Weltgeschichte*]. It seems to me that the distinction, which stems from metaphysics, between theory and praxis, and the representation of some kind of transmission between the two, blocks the way to an insight into what I

understand by thinking. Perhaps I may refer here to my lectures which appeared in 1954 with the title *What is Called Thinking?** Perhaps it is also a sign of the times that this book of all my publications has been read the least.

S: Let us go back to our beginning. Would it not be conceivable to regard National Socialism, on the one hand, as the realization of that "global encounter" and, on the other, as the last, worst, strongest, and at the same time most impotent protest against this encounter "of global technology" and contemporary man? Evidently you experience an opposition in your own person which is such that many by-products of your activity can really only be explained by the fact that, with various parts of your being, which are not concerned with your philosophical core, you cleave to many things which you as a philosopher know have no substance—concepts, for example, like "homeland," "roots," or the like. How do global technology and the homeland fit together?

H: I would not say that. It seems to me that you are taking technology too absolutely. I do not see the situation of man in the world of global technology as a fate which cannot be escaped or unraveled. On the contrary, I see the task of thought to consist in helping man in general, within the limits allotted to thought, to achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology. National Socialism, to be sure, moved in this direction. But those people were far too limited in their thinking to acquire an explicit relationship to what is really happening today and has been underway for three centuries.

S: Perhaps present-day Americans have this explicit relationship?

H: They do not have it either. They are still caught up in a thought (Pragmatism) which favors functions and manipulations but which, at the same time, blocks the way to a meditation on what properly belongs to modern technology. Meanwhile there are in the U.S.A. some stirrings of efforts to get away from pragmatic-positivistic thought. And who of us can say whether or not one day in Russia and China the ancient traditions of a "thought" will awaken which will help make possible for man a free relationship to the technical world?

* Translators' note: Martin Heidegger, *Was Heisst Denken?* 2. Aufl. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961); English translation: *What is Called Thinking?*, translated by F. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper, 1968).

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S: But if no one has it and the philosopher cannot give it to anyone

H: It is not for me to decide how far I will get with my attempt to think and in what way it will be accepted in the future and transformed in a fruitful way. In 1957 I gave a lecture on the anniversary of the University of Freiburg, called "The Principle of Identity."^{*} That lecture tried to show, in a few steps, just how far a thoughtful experience of what is most proper to modern technology can go. It showed that the possibility arises for man in the technological world to experience a relationship to a claim which he not only can hear but to which he himself belongs. My thinking stands in a definitive relationship to the poetry of Hölderlin. I do not take Hölderlin to be just any poet whose work, among many others, has been taken as a subject by literary historians. For me Hölderlin is the poet who points to the future, who expects god and who therefore may not remain merely an object of Hölderlin research and of the kind of presentations offered by literary historians.

S: A propos of Hölderlin, we ask your indulgence to quote your own writings. In your Nietzsche lectures you said that the "widely known opposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, between the sacred passion and sober presentation, is a hidden stylistic law of the historical destiny of the Germans and we must be prepared and ready one day to be formed by it. This opposition is not a formula with whose help we describe 'culture.' With this opposition, Hölderlin and Nietzsche have put a question mark before the Germans' task to find their being historically. Will we understand this sign, this question mark? One thing is sure. History will take revenge upon us if we don't understand it." We do not know in what year you wrote that. We would guess it was in 1935.

H: The quote probably belongs to the Nietzsche lecture, "The Will to Power as Art," 1936–37. It could also have been written in the following years.[†]

S: So, would you clarify this a bit? It leads us from generalities to the concrete destiny of the Germans.

^{*} Translators' note: See n. 11.

[†] Translators' note: Heidegger's guess is right; cf. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), B. I, p. 124.

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H: I could explain what was said in the quotation in the following way: it is my conviction that a reversal can be prepared only in the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated, and that it cannot happen because of any takeover by Zen Buddhism or any other Eastern experiences of the world. There is need for a rethinking which is to be carried out with the help of the European tradition and of a new appropriation of that tradition. Thinking itself can be transformed only by a thinking which has the same origin and calling.

S: It is exactly at the same place where the technological world originated, that it must, as you think . .

H: be transcended [*aufgehoben*] in the Hegelian sense, not pushed aside, but transcended, but not through man alone.

S: You assign in particular a special task to the Germans?

H: Yes, in the sense of the dialogue with Hölderlin.

S: Do you believe that the Germans have a special qualification for this reversal?

H: I have in mind especially the inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and with their thought. This has been confirmed for me today again by the French. When they begin to think, they speak German, being sure that they could not make it with their own language.

S: Are you trying to tell us that that is why you have had such a strong influence on the Romance countries, in particular the French?

H: Because they see that they can no longer get by in the contemporary world with all their great rationality when it comes right down to understanding the world in the origin of its being. One can translate thinking no more satisfactorily than one can translate poetry. At best one can circumscribe it. As soon as one makes a literal translation everything is changed.

S: A discomforting thought.

H: We would do well to take this discomfort seriously and on a large scale, and to finally consider the grave consequences of the transformation which Greek thought experienced when it was translated into Roman Latin. Indeed this today, even this, blocks the way to an adequate reflection on the fundamental words of Greek thought.

S: Professor, we must always start with the optimistic assumption that something which can be communicated can also be translated. For if we cease to be optimistic about the contents of thought being commu-

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nicated beyond linguistic barriers, then we are threatened by provincialism.

H: Would you characterize Greek thought as it differs from the mode of representation in the Roman Empire as “provincial”? Business letters can be translated into all languages. The sciences (today, the natural sciences with mathematical physics as the fundamental science) are translatable into all world languages. Or put more accurately: they are not translated but the same mathematical language is spoken. We are touching here on a field which is broad and difficult to survey.

S: Perhaps this is also part of the problem. It is no exaggeration to say that we have at the moment a crisis of the democratic-parliamentary system. We have had it for a long time! We have it especially in Germany, but not only in Germany. We have it also in the classical democratic countries, England and America. In France it is not even a crisis anymore. Now for the question. Could not the “thinker” provide us with indications—as far as I am concerned as by-products—which would show that either this system must be replaced by a new one (and, if so, how this new system is supposed to look) or else that a reform ought to be possible (and if so, how this reform could come about)? Otherwise, we are left with this situation: the person normally in charge of things (even though he might not determine them and even though things are usually in charge of him) is not a person trained in philosophy and is going to reach faulty conclusions, perhaps with disastrous results. So shouldn’t the philosopher be prepared to give thought to how human beings can get along with their fellow men in a world which they themselves have made so thoroughly technological, and which has perhaps overpowered them? Isn’t one justified in expecting a philosopher to give us some indications as to how he perceives the possibility for life? And does the philosopher not miss a part (if you want, a small part) of his profession and his calling if he has nothing to say about that?

H: So far as I can see, an individual is not, because of thought, in a position to grasp the world as a whole so that he could give practical instructions, particularly in the face of the problem of finding a basis for thinking itself. So long as it takes itself seriously vis-à-vis the great tradition, it would be asking too much of thinking to have it set about giving instructions. By what authority could this take place? In the realm of thinking there are no authoritative assertions. The only measure for

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thinking is the matter which is itself to be thought. But this is above everything else questionable. In order to make this state of affairs clear we would need above a discussion of the relationship between philosophy and the sciences, for the technical and practical successes of the sciences make thinking in the sense of philosophy appear today to be more and more superfluous. Thinking has by reason of its own task put itself in a difficult situation. And along with this difficulty, there is also an alienation from thinking, an alienation which is nourished by the position of power occupied by the sciences, so that thinking must give up answering questions of a practical and world-wide character, the very answers that are demanded by daily necessities.

S: Professor, in the realm of thinking there are no authoritative assertions. So it can really not be surprising that modern art finds it difficult to make authoritative assertions. Nevertheless, you call it destructive. Modern art often considers itself experimental art. Its works are attempts

H: I don't mind being taught.

S: attempts [which arise] out of the isolated situation of contemporary man and of the artist. And out of 100 attempts now and again one will chance to hit the mark.

H: This is exactly the great question. Where does art stand? What place does it occupy?

S: Good enough. But then you are asking of art what you no longer demand of thought.

H: I ask nothing of art. I am only saying that there is a question about what place art occupies.

S: If art does not know its place, is it therefore destructive?

H: All right, cross that out! However, I would like to say that I do not see how modern art shows the way, especially since we are left in the dark as to how modern art perceives or tries to perceive what is most proper to art.

S: The artist, too, lacks a sense of being bound to that which has been handed down. He can find something to be beautiful, and he can say: one could have painted that 600 years ago or 300 years or even 30. But he can no longer do it. Even if he wanted to, he could not do it. For otherwise the greatest artist would be the ingenious forger, Hans van Meegeren, who would then paint "better" than all the others. But that

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just isn't true anymore. So the artist, writer, and poet are in a situation similar to the thinker. How often must we say: close your eyes?

H: If one takes the "culture industry" as a framework for relating art and poetry and philosophy, then the comparison is justified. However, if not only the idea of an "industry" is questionable, but also what "culture" means, then the meditation on what is questionable here belongs to the realm of those tasks which are assigned to thought, whose distressing situation can hardly be comprehended. But the greatest distress of thought consists in the fact that today, as far as I can see, no thinker speaks who is "great" enough to bring thinking immediately, and in a formative way, before its subject matter, and thereby to get it underway. For us contemporaries the greatness of what is to be thought is too great. Perhaps we might bring ourselves to build a narrow and not far-reaching footpath as a passageway.

S: Professor Heidegger, thank you for this interview.

Translated by Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo