

# QUEL CHE RESTA DI HEIDEGGER, A QUARANT'ANNI DALLA MORTE

COSA RESTA DI HEIDEGGER?

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**N**ON è difficile immaginare, prevedere, auspicare, che Heidegger resti, con la sua opera, nel nostro orizzonte filosofico. Sarebbe assurdo che si verificasse il contrario.

D'altronde, sono state solo voci isolate a promuovere due anni fa, durante la pubblicazione dei *Quaderni neri*, la campagna per proscrivere e scomunicare una volta per tutte il filosofo. Altrimenti – questo è stato ribadito più volte – la filosofia avrebbe dovuto ammettere la sua definitiva *débauche*. Inizialmente capeggiata da Faye, poi rimasto nell'ombra, questa campagna ha trovato nuovi sostenitori in Francia, in Germania, in Italia. Si tratta per lo più di moralisti dell'ultima ora che pretendono di decidere, al di qua del bene e del male, tra i buoni e i cattivi, tra il bianco e il nero. Come se la filosofia non abitasse proprio nella complessità del chiaroscuro.

Vale la pena sottolineare che costoro non sono stati toccati dall'antisemitismo, considerato null'altro che una ratifica ulteriore del nazismo, un tema perciò superfluo. A che pro discuterne, se la condanna è già pronunciata grazie all'impegno nazista? C'è stato perfino chi ha provato una certa insofferenza. Paradigmatiche sono le parole di Rastier: «L'antisemitismo, d'altra parte, non può nascondere il nazismo radicale da cui proviene e che traspare in ogni pagina».<sup>1</sup>

Dopo quasi tre anni di dibattito si può dire che la posizione di Faye & Co., quella dell'anti-heideggerismo ideologico, moralistico e ottuso, non abbia sortito alcun effetto. I pochi accolti – in genere prestati alla filosofia, piuttosto che filosofi – sono rimasti isolati. Chi ha un dogma può tentare solo di imporlo, se ci riesce.

Non meno sterile si è rivelata la posizione opposta, quella degli “orfani risentiti”. Così ho chiamato nel mio ultimo libro *Heidegger & Sons. Eredità e futuro di un filosofo*, coloro che hanno reagito con veemenza nostalgica allo choc che ha colpito il mondo della filosofia dopo la pubblicazione dei *Quaderni neri*.

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<sup>1</sup> F. RASTIER, *Naufrage d'un prophète. Heidegger aujourd'hui*, Puf, Paris 2015, p. 167.

Gli orfani risentiti rappresentano un modo di ereditare, che è quello della reazione, il modo reazionario, sia sotto l'aspetto filosofico sia sotto quello politico. Perciò molti si collocano apertamente a destra. A cominciare dai "grandi eredi", o presunti tali, da von Hermann a Fédier. Ma questo schieramento è più frastagliato di quel che si crede. Gli orfani risentiti hanno le età più diverse e soprattutto hanno differente consapevolezza e i motivi più disparati per il loro gesto reazionario.

Alcuni, forse i più, sono rimasti in silenzio, sia prima che dopo; un silenzio d'attesa, ma spesso già di riprovazione. «Come osate mettere in gioco Heidegger per pochi passi antisemiti»? In questa domanda retorica, talvolta articolata a chiare lettere, più spesso solo accennata, si compendia la loro tesi. Immersi nel sonno dogmatico dell'assiomatica heideggeriana, di cui si considerano gli unici depositari, gli orfani risentiti rivolgono il proprio risentimento contro chi sopravvive al lutto, senza per questo smettere di essere orfano, e vedono negli altri eredi dei "traditori". Non vogliono discutere, né tanto meno dialogare. Assorbiti dalla ripetizione di ciò che è stato, sono insediati nell'archivio, quell'eredità presa per una qualsiasi proprietà, che perciò non vogliono condividere, sono trincerati – fino all'ultimo foglio e all'ultima lettera – nel culto idolatrico del Grande Padre perduto.

Queste due posizioni estreme, quella di Faye & Co. e quella degli "orfani risentiti" hanno finora ostacolato il dibattito. Ciononostante non sono mancati incontri e *meeting* internazionali, dove filosofe e filosofi di diversi continenti hanno avuto modo di discutere sull'antisemitismo di Heidegger, ma anche – più in generale – sullo stile *Quaderni neri*, sui temi affrontati, sul loro statuto nell'ambito della *Gesamtausgabe*.

Quel che emerge, infatti, – e con chiarezza – è il nesso stretto che lega gli *Schwarze Hefte* al resto dell'opera. Il che inficia e confuta ipotesi, come quella formulata inizialmente da Figal, volte a legittimare una lettura selettiva, che consenta, senza troppe cautele, di scegliere alcuni testi piuttosto che altri. Il che avrebbe per di più il pregio di poter aggirare facilmente il cosiddetto "errore" del coinvolgimento politico. *Essere e tempo* sì – i *Quaderni neri* no. Questo grottesco aut aut, che farebbe comodo a una certa fenomenologia vecchio stampo, appare del tutto arbitrario.

Che sia impossibile scindere *Essere e tempo* dai *Quaderni neri*, come in genere da tutta l'opera postuma, è lo stesso Heidegger ad attestarlo. Le *Annotazioni I-V* (1942-1948), del volume 97, contengono una grande quantità di pagine interamente dedicate a *Sein und Zeit*. Questo ripensamento assume dapprima il tono di un'autodifesa, per diventare, in seguito, la certezza che la sua opera abbia un futuro.<sup>2</sup> Heidegger rivendica quel che ha pensato e scritto. Con

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. M. HEIDEGGER, *Anmerkungen I-V* (*Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948*), GA 97, Klostermann, Frankfurt 2015, p. 166.

enfasi sottolinea l'importanza che riveste ai suoi occhi l'opera: «1807: *Fenomenologia dello spirito*. 1867: *Il capitale*. 1927. *Essere e tempo*». <sup>3</sup> La ricostruzione del confronto con *Essere e tempo* nei *Quaderni neri* sarà dunque un compito, rilevante e impegnativo, di cui dovrà occuparsi seriamente la ricerca. In modo solo cursorio si possono riassumere alcuni argomenti.

Se, proprio sulla base delle *Annotazioni* ultime, appare insensato separare *Essere e tempo* dai *Quaderni neri*, sembrerebbe riproporsi una volta di più la questione dei fili che si dipanano da quella prima opera e che potrebbero motivare filosoficamente le successive scelte politiche. Nel dopoguerra, Heidegger scrive a chiare lettere che il suo errore non è stato solo politico – *der Irrtum war nicht bloß “politischer”* – e, anzi, sotto il profilo onto-storico non è stato un errore; lo è stato, invece, in prospettiva filosofica, perché ha precorso i tempi e creduto di riconoscere un superamento della metafisica là, dove non c'era ancora. <sup>4</sup>

È in tale contesto che va letto – come ho già avuto modo più volte di sottolineare – l'«antisemitismo metafisico». <sup>5</sup> Credo che sia un errore banalizzare l'antisemitismo di Heidegger, come fa, ad esempio, Nancy. Ho scelto l'aggettivo «metafisico» a differenza del *seinsgeschichtlich*, preferito invece da Trawny, che argina e contiene l'antisemitismo solo all'interno della storia dell'Essere. Il che lascerebbe aperta l'eventualità che Heidegger non sia stato antisemita prima e dopo la “svolta”. <sup>6</sup> L'*antisemitismo metafisico* di Heidegger ha una provenienza teologica, un'intenzione politica, un rango filosofico. Nel riprendere un tema antico nella tradizione occidentale, il rapporto tra l'Essere e l'Ebreo, Heidegger lega il destino dell'ebraismo con quello della metafisica. Dato che l'Ebreo deve rispondere della colpa più grave, l'oblio dell'Essere, resta insediato nel cuore del pensiero di Heidegger, nel centro della questione, per eccellenza, della filosofia.

Quando parlo di *antisemitismo metafisico*, mentre aggravo la posizione di Heidegger – e credo che la mia interpretazione sia la più severa – al contempo indico nella metafisica dell'Ebreo un'impasse del pensiero di Heidegger, una ricaduta nella metafisica, da cui è possibile – anzi indispensabile – ripartire. Proprio quel crinale rappresenta un bivio da cui riprendere il cammino di Heidegger, per una direzione ben differente dalla sua: quella verso cui lui non si è avventurato.

Che cosa resta allora oggi di Heidegger? I *Quaderni neri* non sono stati, come qualcuno aveva profetizzato, la pietra tombale sul pensiero di Heidegger. Si è verificato piuttosto il contrario: Heidegger è stato protagonista di un

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. D. DI CESARE, *Heidegger e gli ebrei. I “Quaderni neri”*, nuova edizione, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. P. TRAWNY, *Heidegger e il mito della cospirazione ebraica*, tr. it. di C. Caradonna, Bompiani, Milano 2015.

dibattito che ha varcato i confini dell'accademia, si è esteso al mondo della cultura, coinvolgendo un pubblico sempre più vasto. Gli *Schwarze Hefte* rappresentano già una componente rilevante della *Wirkungsgeschichte*, della storia degli effetti prodotti dal pensiero di Heidegger.

Non sappiamo quale sarà la "fortuna" dell'autore dopo i *Quaderni neri*, ma certo cambierà la ricezione dei suoi scritti, cioè il modo di interpretarne riflessioni, concetti, intuizioni. Per fare un esempio, la lettura del saggio *La questione della tecnica* o della *Lettera sull'"umanismo"* non potrà più essere la stessa, per via di quello che Heidegger dice nei quaderni sulla tecnica e sullo sradicamento.

Occorre perciò chiedersi quali siano i nuovi temi all'ordine del giorno, quali le questioni aperte. E si può tentare di rispondere in modo provvisorio.

La vera novità dei *Quaderni neri*, com'è parso sin dall'inizio, è l'antisemitismo. Il tema "Heidegger e il nazismo" non rappresenta invece la novità. Il che non vuol dire che non sia rilevante. Le pagine dei quaderni mostrano, però, che il nodo non sta nel rapporto tra politica e filosofia. Heidegger ha aderito al nazismo, per convinzione. Perciò si è trattato, non di un "errore", bensì di un rapporto lungo e profondo. Dopo i *Quaderni neri* si potrà discutere sul modo in cui Heidegger vede il nazismo, sulle sue critiche a quel movimento che talvolta accusa di essere «barbaro», ma in cui ha riposto le speranze della Germania e ha affidato una missione nella sua storia dell'Essere.

Anche lo stereotipo del filosofo adagiato in un conformismo impolitico appare del tutto immotivato. Heidegger non è stato in nessun modo un «conformista» e nei *Quaderni neri* appare un filosofo politicamente radicale. Sarà necessario perciò riscrivere il capitolo "Heidegger e la politica", che promette di essere ben più complesso di quel che sinora si è supposto. Inedite sono le riflessioni sulla globalizzazione.

Strettamente connesso a quello della politica è il tema della teologia, reso ancora più intricato dall'antigiudaismo che, soprattutto negli ultimi quaderni, assume forme esasperate. Per altro verso non si può non riconoscere che l'escatologia dell'Essere, anche per il carattere soteriologico che assume, porta Heidegger ad arrovellarsi intorno alla domanda su Dio e sul rapporto tra Dio e l'Essere.

Due temi particolarmente critici sono quello dell'etica, su cui manca un ripensamento anche nel dopoguerra, e quello della metafisica, o meglio, della critica alla metafisica che certamente dovrà essere ridiscusso. A partire da qui, sarà indispensabile interrogarsi sul posto che spetta a *Essere e tempo* nell'opera complessiva che si è andata così modificando.

I *Quaderni neri* fanno saltare gli schemi attraverso i quali Heidegger è stato sin qui interpretato. Se cambiano le coordinate interpretative, valse finora per il pensiero di Heidegger, le ripercussioni si avvertiranno su tutta la filosofia continentale.

## HEIDEGGER'S REMAINS

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To the question of what remains of Heidegger after the publication of his politically and morally compromising “Black Notebooks”, the simple and direct answer is “Everything!” To give such an answer is not to deny what must now be considered undeniable: that Heidegger *on philosophical grounds* affirmed a ‘spiritualized’ form of National Socialism and Anti-Semitism and therefore did so well beyond and independently of his limited direct political involvement in 1933<sup>7</sup>. My answer instead is based on the claim that Heidegger’s texts remain nevertheless works of philosophy and as such merit the attention of philosophers. If these works range from brilliant philosophy to rather bad philosophy, which is how I would characterize much of the “Black Notebooks”, this does not mean that the latter should not be read; on the contrary, we have much to learn from considering how a thinker otherwise so clairvoyant could go so seriously astray.

What is indeed shocking about the “Black Notebooks” are not only the Anti-Semitic comments that have received practically all the attention, but also how philosophically uninteresting are the hundreds of pages on which such comments do not appear: though not without their flashes of insight and their productive provocations, they are in large part mind-numbingly repetitive and even boring, practically a self-parody that offers little matter for thought to someone who has already studied Heidegger’s other texts. It is revealing that what many of us consider to be the best Heidegger has to offer, namely, his lecture courses, are dismissed by him in the “Black Notebooks” as what is ‘small’ in the context of his attempt to think what is great; they are *all*, he claims, intended always only as a ‘foreground’ (*Vordergrund*) and indeed most often as a ‘cover’ (*Verstecken*) (GA94, 257).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Undeniable’ not because the most extreme Heideggerians will not continue to deny it, but because they must resort to such desperate measures to do so that they cannot help but discredit themselves. One need only read the contributions of Pascal David, Gérard Guest, Yann Moix, and François Fédier in *Heidegger et les Juifs*, «La Règle du Jeu», 58/59 (September 2015): 109-233. It may nevertheless unfortunately be true that, as Yves Charles Zarka sarcastically comments in the same volume, «l’heideggérianisme de ce genre d’initiés a encore de beaux jours devant lui» (676).

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger accordingly prefaces *Anmerkungen IV* with the following quotation from Leibniz: «Qui me non nisi editis novit, non novit» [«who does not know me except through my published works does not know me»] (GA97, 325). See also GA97, 109. I quote Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* with the abbreviation GA, followed by the volume number and the page number.

When we consider the extremely important and influential courses Heidegger was giving at this time, we can only be shocked by such a dismissal. But this comment not only explains the value he accorded to his 'esoteric' writings, but also thereby reveals the fundamentally anti-dialogical character of his thought. For Heidegger dialogue with the tradition and dialogue with contemporaries *compromised* his thought and could therefore only be a façade behind which his thought could pursue its solitary way. But then the "Black Notebooks" reveal what becomes of Heidegger when he is freed from the exigencies of dialogue and is free to pursue a monologue: like most people who talk only to themselves, he becomes obsessive, repetitive, delusional and uncritical, with all of his worst tendencies reinforced and amplified. Ironically, Heidegger is arguably at his worst when he thinks he is at his best. I for one much prefer Heidegger conversing with Aristotle to Heidegger conversing with himself.

In their excesses and one-sidedness, the "Black Notebooks" also expose the dangers and limitations of a radically new way of thinking that has proved otherwise so fruitful. If, for example, we find philosophically stimulating and productive Heidegger's critique of modern technology, we must also come to terms with the fact that it elides any essential difference between the modern agricultural industry and the fabrication of corpses in gas chambers (GA79, 27). If we find compelling his critique of Enlightenment rationalism, we must also acknowledge that it undermines any possibility of appealing to universal human rights (see GA96, 16). If we find compelling his critique of metaphysics, we must also acknowledge that it destroys any political or ethical distinctions, putting politics and ethics as such on the side of the metaphysics to be overcome (GA95, 232; GA96, 13-14; 43; 141). If we find compelling Heidegger's narrative of the history of Being, we must acknowledge that in this narrative not only Fascist and Democrat (see GA97, 44-45), but even Nazi and Jew become indistinguishable (see GA96, 56).

Let us reflect on this last point for a moment. What should most disturb us is not that Heidegger should claim that the extermination of the Jews is a self-extermination (GA97, 20), as if this were only some inexplicable prejudice rooted in the hidden depths of his psychology, but rather that this claim that must strike us as completely absurd *makes perfect sense in the context of Heidegger's history of Being and critique of modernity*. If both Nazis and Jews represent the dominance of calculative rationality and of the technological worldview, then from the perspective of the history of Being, which is the only perspective that is for Heidegger worthy of a thinker, they are the *same*. In this case, the Holocaust must be interpreted as the *self-destruction* of the "Machenschaft" of being, a self-destruction Heidegger must *welcome* as opening the possibility to a new beginning. As Heidegger explains in the "Black Notebooks", if he was mistaken in 1933 when he saw in National Socialism the possibility of a

new beginning, he came to see and affirm its greatness as lying elsewhere: in its ability, on account precisely of its ‘barbarity’ and ‘ruthlessness’ (see GA95, 402, 404), to bring the first beginning to its culmination in the “completion of modernity” (GA95, 408-9). What is perhaps most surprising, therefore, is that neither the Anti-Semitic comments nor the unwillingness to oppose National Socialism are really surprising: they are both revealed to be perfectly at home in Heidegger’s thought.

Should we then reject this thought *in toto* because we reject the Anti-Semitism and the fascist politics? That would be simply thoughtless. Rather, those of us who have found Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics and of modern technology compelling need now ourselves to adopt a more critical attitude towards this critique. If we must grant that Heidegger’s warnings about the uprootedness brought about by the modern technological age have only been confirmed since his death, we must also acknowledge that a consequence of simply critiquing this uprootedness is the rhetoric of a “spiritualized” “earth” and “blood” to which Heidegger fell prey (see GA36/37, 263). We are left to ask if the only alternative to a superficial cosmopolitanism are delusions about the metaphysical destiny of a people.<sup>9</sup>

If something does not or should not remain of Heidegger after the publication of the “Black Notebooks”, it is the idolatry and discipleship of which Heidegger has been the object. What does not or should not remain are ‘Heideggerians’ understood as those who identify with the teaching of the ‘Master’, simply parroting what he said and incapable of subjecting his texts and his thought to serious and radical critique. What does not or should not remain are ‘Heidegger societies’ if these are understood as advocacy groups.<sup>10</sup> It should be obvious that to read Heidegger’s texts and take them seriously is not to advocate for them. To read these texts uncritically has always been not only unphilosophical but also guilty of turning Heidegger’s thought into an ideology. The “Black Notebooks” only reveal how dangerous this is and how susceptible Heidegger’s own thought is to degenerating into ideology of the most repugnant sort. We should celebrate that the idol is destroyed, that it is no longer possible to be Heideggerian without also being anti-Heideggerian, and that some of the most important philosophical texts of the twentieth century are now liberated for genuinely critical engagement.

<sup>9</sup> Can we describe as anything but delusional Heidegger’s “presentiment” (*Ahnung*) at the end of the war that «our homeland, the center of the Southwest German land, will be [*seyn*] the birthplace of the essence of the West» (GA97, 54)?

<sup>10</sup> This, I believe, is the significance of Günter Figal’s courageous and principled resignation from the directorship of the *Heidegger Gesellschaft*. When one Heideggerian dismisses this act by suggesting that Figal «was never very interested in Heidegger», she can only be insinuating, given Figal’s significant and important work on Heidegger, that he was never ‘a true follower’ (BABETTE BABICH, in *Heidegger et les Juifs*, cit., p. 418).

It is a symptom of the same problem that some should now want to suppress these texts. Only someone who has turned Enlightenment rationalism itself into an ideology, only someone who therefore dismisses as apriori unphilosophical any critique of the Enlightenment, only someone who will not or cannot read Heidegger's texts for anything but the evidence they provide of National Socialist sympathies, only such a person can claim that nothing remains of Heidegger within philosophy and that his works should be shelved in the library alongside the works of Adolf Hitler.<sup>11</sup> There is a difference of course between saying that Heidegger's philosophy is problematic and even deeply flawed and saying that it is not philosophy at all. There is a difference between questioning and challenging Heidegger's conception of philosophy and claiming that he used philosophy only as a cover for National Socialist proselytizing. There is a difference between saying that Heidegger provided a kind of philosophical support for National Socialism and Anti-Semitism and saying, despite the thousands of pages of evidence to the contrary, that he was no more a thinker than was Hitler or Goebbels, that he was *nothing but* a National Socialist and Anti-Semite. If the publication of the "Black Notebooks" should put an end to "Heideggerians", this is not to say that it supports the position of those whom Derrida appropriately called "anti-heideggériens de service." Indeed, it is to be hoped that, because Heidegger's Nazism and Anti-Semitism are now out in the open and cannot be denied by anyone who reads Heidegger seriously as an important thinker, the Anti-Heideggerians will no longer be able to make periodic use of scandalous revelations in newspapers to conveniently dismiss his whole oeuvre. Ironically, one can hope that one thing that has come to an end now is the constant cycle of Heidegger 'crises' and once again to the advantage of what remains: Heidegger's challenging and provocative, equally inspiring and maddening, philosophical texts.

#### HEIDEGGER, THE SCOURGE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

RICHARD POLT\*

The great thinkers and movements of the Enlightenment celebrate the ability of the human mind to rise above its particular surroundings, understand them, and improve them. Heidegger is, from the start, an enemy of this line of thought. He points to the many forms of dependence that reason presupposes and, according to him, can never eliminate. We depend on our nonrational familiarity with the norms and practices of our culture; we depend on

<sup>11</sup> I of course am primarily thinking here of E. FAYE, *Heidegger, l'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005).

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unpredictable moments of illumination; we depend on our involuntary exposure to meaning itself. These shadowy preconditions of “unconcealment” sustain all our rational certainties and plans. When the Enlightenment forgets its roots, it distorts the human condition and destroys the richness and mystery of things. The result, Heidegger says, is a growing wasteland – a world where all beings, including human beings, are reduced in both theory and practice to mere objects present for measurement and resources present for exploitation.

Heidegger shares some positions with other critics of Enlightenment rationalism. Like the Romantics, he seeks revelations in moods and in the particularity of land and language. Like Kierkegaard, he rejects totalizing systems and, in *Being and Time*, emphasizes commitment to a possibility in the face of dread and despair.

But Heidegger goes farther than these modern antimodernists – questioning assumptions about truth and reality that are pervasive in modernity, reaching back to early Greek thinking, and reviving the question of being. In pursuing this question, he undercuts traditional distinctions such as that between essence and existence: he asks in one breath what it means to be something rather than nothing, as well as how beings are revealed as belonging to certain kinds and possessing certain traits. He identifies “presence” as the central meaning of being that has sustained Western inquiry and practice for millennia. In order to deconstruct and overturn that tradition, he even pushes back to a question that precedes presence itself: what enables us to understand being at all in any way, to recognize any distinction between something and nothing?

His answer in the 1920s is that our understanding of being is made possible by time – a conjunction of situated thrownness, projected possibilities, and engagement in the world. This structure cannot be understood in terms of mere presence, as if the future were simply what is not yet present, and the past were simply what is no longer present. Presence is a field of being that emerges within only one of the three temporal “ecstases”; presence is too narrow to embrace the whole of being, including our own being.

In the 1930s, Heidegger tries to understand time more radically, not as a structure but as an *Ereignis* or “appropriating event” – an emergency that thrusts us into the condition of being-there. In such an event, being would become an issue for us, and we would be assigned our own site and moment. This line of thought brings with it an obsessive focus on the inception, the elusive origin of our condition.

In the 1940s and '50s, this obsession becomes less urgent, and Heidegger meditates on the “open region” into which we have been “released.” This region is not a structure either, but a permeable, vulnerable clearing. He encourages us to encounter the things that emerge in the clearing with a new simplicity and respect.

All of these lines of thought are, as Heidegger likes to say, paths, many of which turn out to be dead ends – or rather *Holzwege*, trails along which we discover the dark woods by getting lost and being forced to backtrack. There is no Heideggerian system. But he articulates questions that remain permanently thought-provoking, precisely because they undermine the Enlightenment's presumptuous confidence in human reason. This antirationalistic direction of Heidegger's thought remains both promising and dangerous.

One of the promises of Heidegger's antirationalism is the resistance it offers to reductionism. This resistance continues to be necessary as the undeniable achievements of modern natural science and technology continue to tempt us to believe that all human phenomena can be explained and understood through techniques that measure, predict, and control the nonhuman. Heidegger opposes modern "humanism," understood as the view that human beings can judge and master all beings, including ourselves, through propositional and calculative thought. But he leaves open the possibility of a deeper humanism that understands humans as distinctive beings whose identity is always in question, who are blessed and burdened with the task of interpreting the whole, and who offer themselves as places where all kinds of beings can reveal themselves, albeit never absolutely. Human beings are historical – not in the sense that they are hemmed in by conventional constructs, but as the recipients of a partial disclosure that has been entrusted to them and that they have the opportunity to develop. This tentative, pluralistic approach to understanding ourselves and our world is a welcome corrective to the positivistic dogmatism of our times.

But these promising aspects of Heidegger's thought coexist with its dangers. As we know, Heidegger chose to align himself with an authoritarian and violent regime – hoping that it would bring a new inception of Western history, a fresh way of taking up his people's destiny. This choice reflects the antiliberal dimension of his antirationalism, and it should never cease troubling his readers.

It is not accurate to describe Heidegger as a convinced Nazi, since from the start he hoped for a questioning more radical than any party slogan or ideology, and his writings of the later 1930s and 1940s develop an extensive critique of the metaphysics of power, will, and machination that he sees at work in National Socialism. However, this metaphysical critique is not accompanied by a moral or political critique, and he even explicitly dismisses such points of view. In texts such as the Black Notebooks, Heidegger portrays all modern movements and forces, including the phantasmagoric power of "world Jewry," as instances of one and the same machinational metaphysics – thus indulging in a closed-minded and simplistic reductionism of his own. The Enlightenment's forgetting of its roots is associated all too easily in Heidegger's discourse with the traditional prejudice against Jews as supposedly no-

madic cosmopolitans. Furthermore, although Heidegger comes to see Nazi ideology as an instance of the calculative and domineering mentality of modernity, he does not resist Nazism either in action or in thought, but submits to it. He views Nazism as the ultimate modern destiny, an extremity of willfulness that must be played out to its catastrophic conclusion before a new inception can become possible.

The coldness and irresponsibility of this view are evident to anyone who still finds truth in a morality of universal respect and in political liberty. But for those who wish to defend this ethical and political vision on philosophical grounds, Heidegger remains essential, even at his most disturbing. Our challenge is to articulate the most promising insights of the Enlightenment while considering Heidegger's incisive critique of the principles and concepts in terms of which those insights have often been articulated. Heidegger brings us face to face with a series of difficult questions:

What are the preconditions for rational thought? Can we preserve an awareness of these preconditions while we continue to analyze and explain the beings around us?

What are the preconditions for rational action? Can we preserve an awareness of these preconditions while we continue to try to act in ways that are rationally justifiable, and to show respect for other rational actors?

These questions are not new, but have been raised in various forms by a series of modern thinkers, in tandem with the progress of the Enlightenment. However, Heidegger's way of raising the questions is especially provocative; even at his most parochial and perverse, his texts challenge defenders of reason to reason more clearly and carefully, with greater attention to reason's limits.

That challenge cannot simply be met by some master thinker whose achievements will then be accepted by subsequent generations. The spirit of the Enlightenment, and of philosophy itself, calls on every individual to face the most difficult questions; another's labor cannot substitute for one's own, but can, at best, only inspire. This is why there is no part of Heidegger's thinking that remains, and no part that does not endure. None of it remains as a settled, proven body of assertions. It all endures as a provocation that can inspire individuals to think more attentively – to deepen unconcealment – to become more enlightened.