

ANTISEMITISM STUDIES

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2 FALL 2017

On Heidegger's Antisemitism

The Peter Trawny Affair

RICHARD WOLIN

The publication history of Martin Heidegger's work is, in part, a tale of selective and substantive textual expurgations. Only recently, with the publication of The Black Notebooks, has it become clear that many of the Master's pro-Nazi and antisemitic declarations have been systematically extruded from the published versions of his lecture courses and seminars. The following article explores this problem in relation to Peter Trawny's recently published Heidegger apologiae, Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy and Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy.

Since the early 1950s, a deceptive and misguided editorial policy has marred the publication history of Heidegger's work. It is now clear that a variety of editors and literary executors have engaged in a systematic effort to suppress traces of the philosopher's pro-Nazi and antisemitic convictions.¹ With the publication in 2014–2015 of the initial four volumes of the so-called *Black Notebooks* (Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* [Collected Works], vols. 94–97), the ideological centrality of such elements in Heidegger's thought has become indubitable. Hence, we are now aware of the extent to which Heidegger, as a philosopher of "temporality" and "historicity," accorded National Socialism a pivotal role in his metanarrative of *Seinsgeschichte* (the history of Being).

In essence, Heidegger believed that National Socialism was the *Ereignis* or Event that would determine whether or not the momentous

transition from the “Greek Beginning” to what he cryptically referred to as “another Beginning” would be successful. As he opines in 1934: “When today the Führer speaks of reeducation on the basis of the National Socialist worldview, this does not mean arbitrarily invoking slogans. Instead, it means effectuating a total transformation, the projection of a world on the basis of which he reeducates the entire Volk. National Socialism is not an arbitrary doctrine, but rather the transformation from the ground up of what is German as well as the entire European world.”² However, only recently has it come to light that, owing to the extensively redacted nature of Heidegger’s texts, scholars have been offered a highly sanitized view of Heidegger’s thought—a version of Heidegger’s philosophy that, for the most part, has been denuded of ideological taint.³

These expurgations began during the 1950s with the initial publication of Heidegger’s prewar lecture courses. In 1953, Max Niemeyer Verlag published Heidegger’s 1935 lecture course, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which concludes with a controversial paean to “the inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism. It was at this juncture that scholars were compelled to confront and assess Heidegger’s practice of substantively emending, under the cover of silence, earlier texts.

Thus, in an instance that has subsequently become somewhat notorious, in preparing the lecture course for publication, Heidegger sought to qualify his claim concerning National Socialism’s “inner truth and greatness,” adding parenthetically that the latter had to do with the “confrontation between planetary technology and modern man.” Heidegger presumably thought that by revising this passage some eight years after National Socialism’s collapse, his partisanship for the regime would seem less marked as well as less reprehensible.⁴ However, in this particular case, of equal importance was Heidegger’s systematic effort to “backdate” his critique of modern technology, making it seem as though such concerns were already central to his work during the 1930s, whereas in truth they only developed in earnest during the postwar period.⁵

One of the reasons that such deceptive practices have proven to be so significant and so controversial is that, by backdating his technology critique, Heidegger sought to misleadingly portray himself as a *critic*, rather than a *supporter*, of the National Socialist project of Pan-European

racial hegemony. (Here, it is worth noting that, in *The Black Notebooks*, too, discerning readers have noted Heidegger's frequent practice of emending earlier passages without comment.) Consequently, the full extent of Heidegger's efforts to, in the words of the University of Siegen philosopher Sidonie Kellerer, "reword the past" has only recently come to light.⁶

Heidegger's practice of persistent and unacknowledged "retouching" has called into question the overall textual reliability of the *Gesamtausgabe*. At the same time, it has become clear why toward the end of his life Heidegger systematically resisted the idea of a "critical edition": that is, an edition that would have documented the textual history of his manuscripts. For a critical edition would have exposed Heidegger's postwar efforts to "retrofit" his technology critique to appear as though it had originated during the 1930s as an expression of his disillusionment with National Socialism.

The editorial efforts to mask Heidegger's enthusiasm for National Socialism and Italian fascism continued with the 1971 publication of his 1936 lecture course on *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. In this case, Heidegger's literary executors and publisher colluded to eliminate the philosopher's elegy to "Hitler and Mussolini," whom Heidegger praised for having "introduced a countermovement to [European] nihilism."⁷ This avowal on Heidegger's part is of paramount importance insofar as it betrays the ideational gist of his commitment to Nazism.

In essence, Heidegger understood fascism, in both its German and Italian variants, as an ontological-historical response to the dilemma of "European nihilism" as diagnosed by Nietzsche during the late 1880s. Thus Heidegger's encomium to the fascist dictators—men of "action" who relied on their charisma; yet, also "leaders" who openly celebrated the use of *Gewalt* (force) in order to bestir the masses from the lethargy of bourgeois *Alltäglichkeit* (everydayness)—betrays his understanding of Nazism as a salutary political response or "countermovement" to the "decline of the West," as articulated by Oswald Spengler and other titans of interwar German *Kulturkritik*.

For these reasons, Heidegger's praise for Hitler and Mussolini is significant not as an adventitious political choice but rather insofar as it reveals something essential about his doctrine of "historicity." Thus

in Heidegger's view, Hitler and Mussolini were exemplars of political *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity). Their methods of political rule broke with the vacuous and nihilistic bourgeois continuum of "progress" in the name of an anti-liberal semantics of "danger" and "risk." As Heidegger informs us in 1934: "When the propeller of an airplane turns, then nothing authentically occurs or takes place. Conversely when the same airplane brings the Führer to Mussolini, *then something historical occurs*. Then the airplane itself enters into history, and will perhaps one day be preserved in a museum. The historical character of the airplane is not dependent on the turning of the propeller, but instead on what the future of this meeting produces."⁸ Hence, by virtue of being incorporated into the drama of "historicity," inanimate objects like a propeller that, to employ the lexicon of Heideggerian *Existenzphilosophie*, are otherwise merely *vorhanden* (present-at-hand), themselves take on an *eigentlich* (authentic) historical cast. Or, as Heidegger blithely avows: under favorable circumstances, they might even end up in a museum.

FROM "MOTORIZED AGRICULTURE" TO AUSCHWITZ AND TREBLINKA

In 1949, Heidegger delivered his so-called Bremen lectures, which were published under the title, "Insight into That Which Is." It was on this occasion that he unveiled his postwar critique of modern technology. In the manuscript version, one finds the following statement, which was omitted from the published version of Heidegger's text: "Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, essentially, the same thing as the production of corpses in gas chambers and concentration camps, the same thing as the blockade and starvation of nations, the same thing as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs."⁹

When this passage ultimately came to light, Heidegger's tasteless analogies were greeted with widespread criticism and disapprobation. His crude comparison of historical circumstances and events that are, in many respects, incomparable stands as a classic instance of the uncomprehending and myopic, "leveling gaze" of Heideggerian *Seinsgeschichte*.

Thus, in the preceding instance, Heidegger makes no attempt to contextualize the phenomena under consideration, all of which have contemporary points of reference. (The allusion to the "blockade and

starvation of nations," for example, refers to the Berlin blockade that was initiated by the Soviet Union in 1948.) Nor does he seek to evaluate or reflect upon the fundamental differences that distinguish these episodes from one other. After all, to blur the distinction between "mechanized agriculture" and the National Socialist *Final Solution to the Jewish Question* would seem misguided to an extreme. Whereas the benefits of mechanized agriculture are potentially enormous, the *Final Solution* has been rightfully adjudged, by Hannah Arendt and others, as a paradigmatic instance of "radical evil."¹⁰

Conversely, in defiance of common sense, Heidegger proposes that when viewed "essentially"—that is, from the ontological-historical perspective of the "history of Being"—these events are fundamentally "the same." What the Germans did to the Jews in the death camps, what the Soviets had inflicted on West Berliners (the blockade), and what the United States had unleashed by constructing thermonuclear weapons are, in Heidegger's view, *politically and morally equivalent* insofar as, according to the leveling gaze of *Seinsgeschichte*, the events in question were all manifestations or effects of *Technik* (technology) and "subjectivity."

Of course, one may reasonably compare and debate the various degrees of Faustian excess or criminality at issue in each of the aforementioned instances. Yet, however the discussion might proceed and whatever conclusions one is tempted to draw, the events in question are in no way "the same." To place the Berlin blockade of 1948 on a par with Auschwitz and Treblinka is to equate incomparables. "Genocide" and "military blockades"—even at their most odious—are hardly, as Heidegger would have us believe, "the same." In retrospect, Heidegger's understanding of these events, as viewed from the ethereal standpoint of the *Seinsfrage* (question of Being), constitutes a transparent attempt to relativize the severity and extent of Germany's war crimes—in the same way that, in *The Black Notebooks*, he held that the postwar occupation of Germany by the Allies was an act of criminality far in excess of anything that had been perpetrated by the Nazis.¹¹

Although Heidegger claimed that *Denken* (thought), as he referred to his own philosophy, embodied a post-metaphysical standpoint that was better suited than competing paradigms to evaluate and comprehend inner-worldly events, the previous examples suggest that,

in truth, his perspective was conducive to mystification and incomprehension. When all is said and done, it is a form of intellectual regression that inhibits, rather than advances, our capacity for analytical discernment and judgmental acumen. In the case at hand, we have a classic illustration of the way that, following the war, Heidegger invoked abstractions such as *Gestell* (Enframing), *Bestand* (standing reserve), and *Seinsverlassenheit* (humanity's abandonment of/by Being) in order to suppress the *Schuldfrage* (the question of German guilt). In sum: if Heidegger's "essentializing" perspective on the omnipotence of modern technology repeatedly engenders such judgmental myopia, one cannot help but call into question its fundamental conceptual cogency.

WORLD JEWRY AND "PLANETARY CRIMINALITY"

Recently it came to light that the *Gesamtausgabe* has suffered from parallel instances of editorial corruption, thereby perpetuating the pattern of ideological manipulation described above. Two years ago, an American scholar investigating the textual history of Heidegger's 1934–35 lecture course, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germanien" and "the Rhein,"* discovered that, in an attempt to preserve the Master from ideological taint, the abbreviation "N. Soz."—a commonplace shorthand for "National Socialism"—had been misleadingly transcribed as "natural science."¹² Heidegger's readers would not learn of the erroneous rendering until 34 years after the original publication of the lecture course in question.

Thus the question arises: how might scholars arrive at a fair-minded appraisal of Heidegger's moral and political actions during the Nazi era if, in so many instances, critical evidence has been systematically withheld, altered, or suppressed? What further revelations concerning editorial manipulation and textual omissions are likely to emerge in the future?

In 2014, scholars learned that yet another salient passage had been intentionally extruded from a volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*. The omission concerned Heidegger's seminal 1938 lecture course, *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (*The History of Being*), which was published in 1998. The passage in question is both shocking and damning. It demonstrates that Heidegger subscribed to the worldview of "eliminationist antisemitism":

a standpoint that holds that the survival of *Deutschtum* (Germanness) and, hence, the eschatological realization of "another Beginning," is contingent upon the *Vernichtung* (annihilation) of "world Jewry." Thus, as Heidegger observes almost matter-of-factly: "[It] would be worthwhile to inquire into world Jewry's unique predisposition to planetary criminality."¹³

Heidegger formulated this avowal while he was a dues-paying member of the Nazi Party. A few months later, in his January 30, 1939 speech commemorating the sixth anniversary of the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power), Hitler delivered the following fateful prophecy: "Today I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!"¹⁴ In the historical context at issue, Heidegger's dictum concerning world Jewry's inherent proclivity to "planetary criminality" is tantamount to a summons to genocide.¹⁵ After all, how else might one dispose of a "race" whose members have become the leading carriers of *Machenschaft* (machination), which Heidegger defines as the unremitting technological devastation of the earth and its inhabitants? As Heidegger observes in *The Black Notebooks*: "Contemporary Jewry's temporary increase in power has its basis in the fact that Western metaphysics . . . offers fertile ground for the dissemination of an empty rationality and calculability, which in this way gains a foothold in 'spirit', without ever being able to grasp from within the hidden realms of decision."¹⁶

The scholar responsible for this grave textual expurgation was *Black Notebooks* editor Peter Trawny—a fact that unavoidably casts a shadow over his editorial stewardship. Ironically, it was the same Peter Trawny who, in *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, revealed to the world the omission of the passage in question in a *Gesamtausgabe* volume that he himself had edited.¹⁷

How might one account for this about-face on Trawny's part: the decision to restore the compromising passage concerning World Jewry's "predisposition to planetary criminality" that had been willfully extruded in the original 1998 edition of *Die Geschichte des Seyns* some sixteen years earlier? Could it have been fear of exposure? After

all, virtually all of Heidegger's original manuscripts are now available to interested scholars at the German Literary Archive (DLA) in Marbach. Moreover, in recent years, many similar textual expurgations and omissions have come to light, engendering embarrassment and consternation among the guardians of Heidegger's *Nachlass*.

A FRENCH DEBACLE

A few months prior to the February–March 2014 publication of *The Black Notebooks*, Trawny, anticipating the risk of Heidegger's wholesale disqualification as a philosopher, distributed advance copies of *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* to a select group of French Heideggerians in order to prepare them for the controversy over the Master's legacy that would undoubtedly ensue. However, once the incriminating pro-Nazi and antisemitic passages from *The Black Notebooks* began making the rounds among French Heideggerians, they were leaked to French journalists. Thus, what began as damage control metastasized into a major intellectual scandal that, at one point, threatened to upstage the impending German publication of *The Black Notebooks* themselves. In fact, many French commentators felt that the revelations in question were so damaging to Heidegger's reputation that a definitive caesura in Heidegger Studies had been reached. Quite simply, in matters Heideggerian, things could not continue as before.¹⁸

The most aggrieved party was France's most prominent Heidegger translator and champion, François Fédier. Fédier, now in his late eighties, has long served as editorial advisor to Heidegger's French publisher, Éditions Gallimard. For nearly five decades, Fédier has been involved in the major and often highly acrimonious French debates over Heidegger's legacy. During the 1960s, Fédier called into question the translations of Heidegger's political speeches on the part of the philosopher and Germanist, Jean-Pierre Faye, author of the highly regarded study, *Langages totalitaires*.¹⁹ Four decades later, Fédier once again acted as a protagonist in the "French Heidegger Wars," debating Faye's son, Emmanuel, who in 2005 published *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*.²⁰ Upon receiving the proofs to Trawny's study, Fédier took to the airwaves of French radio, revealing the incriminating

Heidegger passages that Trawny had furnished and providing his own exculpatory commentary in an attempt to downplay their import and significance—to little avail, however.

Fédier's most embarrassing moment undoubtedly occurred in Winter 2014 when he took his case directly to *Gesamtausgabe* publisher Vittorio Klostermann, urging the latter to suppress *The Black Notebooks'* publication, despite the fact that their appearance had already been publicly announced. Tacitly acknowledging the extremely compromising nature of the pro-Nazi passages in question, Fédier argued that *The Black Notebooks* failed to qualify as philosophy since "philosophy" and National Socialism—which is not "philosophy" but a "worldview"—are logically incompatible.²¹

Thereby, Fédier sought to deploy an interpretive ruse that is commonly employed by Heidegger's defenders. Elements of Heidegger's thought that are at odds with the pristine image of the philosopher's legacy that his adherents seek to promote are summarily *written out of the canon*—despite the fact that Heidegger himself, in *The Black Notebooks* and in related texts from the 1930s—had few doubts about the enduring affinities between the "National Awakening" of 1933 and the basic tenets of his philosophy. Thus, time and again, like a phoenix reborn, Heidegger seems to re-emerge after each successive scandal, pristine and unscathed.

Among contemporary French intellectuals—the heirs to Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, and Jean-Paul Sartre—Fédier's widely publicized efforts to impede *The Black Notebooks'* publication received little support. Instead, his actions were widely perceived as unscholarly and maladroit—a shameless and unprofessional act of desperation.²² Previously, the editor of the mammoth *Dictionnaire Martin Heidegger*, Hadrian France-Lanord, had asserted that there was not an antisemitic statement to be found in the entirety of Heidegger's philosophical corpus.²³ But upon perusing the bone-chilling professions of antisemitism that suffuse *The Black Notebooks*, France-Lanord took to the airwaves of French television—the venue he selected was the intellectual talk show, "Réplique"—to avow that he could no longer abide by his earlier verdict.²⁴ Instead, he had come round to the view of the journalist, Thomas Assheuer, who, in an article entitled, "Das vergiftete Erbe" ("The Empoisoned Legacy"), declared that, "[t]he hermeneutic trick of

acknowledging Heidegger's anti-Semitism only in order to permanently cordon it off from his philosophy proper is no longer convincing. The anti-Jewish enmity of the *Black Notebooks* is no afterthought; instead, *it forms the basis of [Heidegger's] philosophical diagnostics.*"²⁵

At this point it also came to light that there were reams of compromising material remaining in Heidegger's *Nachlass* that had yet to appear. It was widely held that the texts in question, instead of being censured, should be published posthaste so that qualified scholars could evaluate them, thereby laying the groundwork for an informed public debate. It was in this spirit that, several years earlier, a group of French intellectuals published an appeal in the pages of *Le Monde* urging the guardians of Heidegger's literary estate to open the archives to researchers in order to resolve the remaining questions related to the Freiburg philosopher's complicity with National Socialism.²⁶

In 2006, Fédier sought to publish with Éditions Gallimard an edited volume, *Heidegger à plus forte raison*: in essence, a broadside against Emmanuel Faye's 2005 *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (2005). However, as it turned out, Fédier's anthology contained an article that tried to sanitize the "negationist" views of the French Heidegger supporter and translator, Jean Beaufret. Since in France, Holocaust denial, along with other forms of hate speech, is a criminal offense, at the eleventh hour, to Fédier's chagrin, Éditions Gallimard refused to publish the volume, forcing him to seek out another publisher.²⁷

"ONTOLOGICAL-HISTORICAL ANTISEMITISM": HEIDEGGER AS A NAZI DISSIDENT

In *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, Trawny might have attempted a forthright and unapologetic assessment of Heidegger's National Socialist involvements, as well as a frank discussion of the way that the Master's political commitments were rooted in his philosophy—a truth that has become incontestable following the publication of *The Black Notebooks*.²⁸ As Heidegger avows during the late 1930s:

From a 'metaphysical' perspective [i.e., from the standpoint of *Seinsgeschichte*], during the years 1930–34 I understood National

Socialism in terms of the possibility of a transition to 'another Beginning.' ... Nevertheless, I mistook and undervalued this 'movement's' genuine power and inner necessity. ... In consequence of newly gained insight with regard to my earlier disappointment concerning National Socialism's essence and essential historical power derives the imperative to endorse it—and to do so *on philosophical grounds*.²⁹

However, in this rather superficial and hastily conceived contribution, Trawny elected to pursue a very different route.

For one, Trawny seeks to cordon off Heidegger's antisemitism vis-à-vis the National Socialist mainstream by qualifying it as an "ontological-historical anti-Semitism." As Trawny avows: "at a certain stage along his path, the philosopher admitted anti-Semitism into his thinking; more precisely, he admitted *a being-historical anti-Semitism*."³⁰ By proceeding thusly, Trawny seeks to characterize Heidegger's antisemitism as decidedly quirky and idiosyncratic, to the point where it becomes almost impossible to take it seriously. When all is said and done, Trawny's "revelations" concerning Heidegger's antisemitism appear to be made in the service of misdirection—that is, only the more effectively to conceal it.³¹

For some time now, scholars of the Third Reich have convincingly demonstrated that Nazi ideology was in point of fact a capacious tent. Hence, it is now well established that it varied to suit the occasion and contained multiple and, at times, conflicting tendencies.³² To judge matters in light of these criteria, Heidegger's positions, as expressed, for example, in the political texts he published during the 1930s, were in no way marginal or idiosyncratic. On the contrary, they harmonized fully with the National Socialist mainstream.³³

Moreover, insofar as the content and tenor of Heidegger's antisemitism in no way prevented him from advancing professionally under the Nazi dictatorship, Trawny's claims seem dubious. Nor did the purportedly "slack," nonconformist character of Heidegger's antisemitism prevent him from carrying out the Nazis' harsh anti-Jewish stipulations and policies during his tenure as Rector of Freiburg University. Instead, as has been well documented, Heidegger fulfilled these duties conscientiously. There was nothing fainthearted or dilatory about Heidegger's National Socialist commitments. As we have known at least since the

publication of Hugo Ott's comprehensive Heidegger biography, when it came to carrying out National Socialist policies, there is nothing to indicate that Heidegger was anything less than a "true believer": *plus royaliste que le roi*.³⁴

Thus, although Trawny readily acknowledges that Heidegger was an antisemite, he is at pains to distinguish the nature of Heidegger's antisemitism from the rabid and inflexible strain of Jew-hatred that culminated in the *Endlösung* (Final Solution). As Trawny observes: "The predicate 'anti-Semitic' is particularly dangerous, because for the most part it is used to announce an ideological complicity with the Shoah. Do all paths of anti-Semitism lead to Auschwitz? No. The etiology of genocide is always problematic because it is always multiple. Heidegger's utterances about the Jews cannot be tied to Auschwitz."³⁵ Thanks to Trawny's imaginative "deconstructive reading"—"The etiology of genocide is . . . always multiple" (a claim that would certainly come as a surprise to most practicing historians)—"indeterminacy" triumphs and Heidegger is miraculously exonerated. Thereby, any potential semantic affinity between Heidegger's antisemitism and the Nazi *Endlösung* is deemed by Trawny to be null and void.

There is something especially risible about the lines I have just quoted. On the one hand, Trawny is at great pains to affirm the "dangerous" character of antisemitism. However, what Trawny is claiming in point of fact is that antisemitism is "dangerous" *not to Jews*, but to *Heidegger's reputation*. Hence, Trawny's real concern is that Heidegger's "complicity with the Shoah" might be exposed. Yet, the taint of antisemitism also poses a serious threat to the precious "cultural capital" that Heideggerians like Trawny have painstakingly accumulated over the years by virtue of their servility on the philosopher's behalf.

One reason that Trawny's claims concerning the non-genocidal nature of Heidegger's antisemitism remain unconvincing is that, in *The Black Notebooks*, Heidegger persistently identifies "world Jewry" as the primary carrier of the technological degradation of *Seiende* (beings). In Heidegger's view, world Jewry's pre-eminence in this regard has placed Western modernity on an apocalyptic path of Spenglerian *Untergang*. This tendency or development constitutes the primary impediment to realizing the promised land of "another Beginning." In all of these respects, Heidegger's views on Judaism

and world Jewry mesh seamlessly with the "exterminationist" antisemitism that defined the National Socialist worldview.³⁶ In sum: the Jews must die so that Germany and the Germans might live to fulfill their salvific, world-historical mission. Or as Heidegger opines in *The Black Notebooks*: "the moment of decision concerning the essence of history is reserved to the Germans."³⁷

Recently, additional compelling testimony concerning the depth and extent of Heidegger's antisemitism has come to light as a result of the publication of the philosopher's correspondence with his brother, Fritz. For one, it is now clear that Heidegger's allegiances to the Nazi *Weltanschauung* took root much earlier than was previously thought.

In December 1931, Heidegger gave Fritz a copy of *Mein Kampf* as a Christmas gift. In his cover letter, he included an encomium to Hitler's "exceptional and unerring political instincts." And in April 1933—still a month before he officially joined the NSDAP—Heidegger could barely contain his enthusiasm about the unparalleled prospects for national renewal that the new regime had unleashed. As he observes: "[w]ith each passing day we see Hitler growing into the role of a Great Statesman. The world of our *Volk* and of our Reich is being wholly reconfigured; everyone who has eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heartbeat to act is caught up in the torrent of genuine and profound enthusiasm." Even after the war, as the devastating revelations concerning the National Socialist *Endlösung* had come to light, Heidegger's antisemitism remained immovable. As he writes to Fritz in April 1946: The expulsion of the Germans from the Eastern territories surpasses in "organized atrocities cum criminality" anything that occurred prior to 1945. Finally, as far as a Germany purged of Jewish influence is concerned, in Heidegger's view, there is very little to regret. As he writes to Fritz in July 1945: "I find a Heinrich Heine Strasse in Messkirch [to be] both senseless and superfluous."³⁸

On the one hand, Trawny is willing to admit that Heidegger was fully aware of the *Final Solution*. He had been kept *au courant* on this score by his close friend, Eugen Fischer, the rather notorious director of the Nazi Institute for Racial Hygiene in Berlin.³⁹ Neither in Heidegger's correspondence nor in *The Black Notebooks* does he display the slightest reservations about these policies. Nor could Heidegger bring himself to distance himself from the regime after the war. On the contrary,

as *The Black Notebooks* demonstrate, Heidegger's abiding fear was that National Socialism might prove *insufficiently radical*. As he observes at one point: "National Socialism is a *barbaric principle*. Therein lie its essence and its capacity for Greatness. The danger is not [National Socialism] itself, but instead that it will be rendered innocuous via a sermon about the True, the Good, and the Beautiful."⁴⁰ Again, under the political and ideological circumstances in question, to accuse an entire people—"world Jewry"—of "planetary criminality" is tantamount to a collective death sentence—a "warrant for genocide." Like the "rational antisemitism" advocated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* and celebrated by Heinrich Himmler in his infamous Poznan speech, it would seem to admit of no exceptions.

Trawny's hesitations and equivocations notwithstanding, with the publication of GA 97 (*Anmerkungen I-V of The Black Notebooks*), we finally have first-hand knowledge of Heidegger's views on the Holocaust. As one might expect, those views are characterized by repression and denial: wholesale *mauvaise foi*. Heidegger characterizes the Holocaust as an act of *judische Selbstvernichtung* (Jewish self-annihilation)—which is merely his way of claiming, meretriciously and perversely, *that Auschwitz was a fate that the Jews ultimately brought upon themselves*.

His reasoning? Relying on a time-honored antisemitic prejudice, Heidegger alleges that, historically, the Jews have been the main carriers of "instrumental reason" or *Machenschaft*, whose predominance has led, inexorably, to the "*uprooting of all beings from Being*." As he declaims in *Überlegungen XII–XV*: "The question of the role of world Jewry is not a racial question but a metaphysical one—a question about what sort of human being can take up the uprooting of all beings from Being as a world-historical task."⁴¹ Hence, as victims of industrialized mass murder at Auschwitz and the other *Vernichtungslager*, "world Jewry" merely succumbed to a fate that it had itself initiated.

By remaining attentive to this rather transparent attempt at "blaming the victim," we stand to learn a valuable lesson about the obfuscatory character of Heidegger's critique of technology—a paradigm for which, paradoxically, he has often been lauded. Thus, according to the framework of the "history of Being," the reason that National Socialism

failed had nothing to do with the intrinsically murderous and imperious nature of the Nazi project. Instead, in the end, Nazism failed because it succumbed to forces and tendencies that were beyond its control. Above all, its aspirations to historical "greatness" were undermined by nefarious "Western" and "Jewish" influences—influences that abetted the technological manipulation of Being in its totality, as Heidegger adverted on many occasions. According to this schema, *National Socialism's shortcomings were entirely the fault of the West*. Consequently, in Heidegger's view, ultimately, National Socialism's "inner truth and greatness" remained unsullied.

On these grounds, Heidegger repeatedly insisted that the "emergence of the German essence" was the only thing standing in the way of the "wholesale self-devastation of modern man."⁴² However, with the benefit of hindsight, one can safely say that Heidegger got all of this backwards. It was the Nazi ideology of "Germanocentrism" that produced the unparalleled devastation of World War II. And following the war, it was Germany's *Verwestlichung* (turn toward the West) that had a healing effect, curing German political culture of its earlier predatory and chauvinistic deformations.

Not only was *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* hastily conceived, its central argument concerning the infamous Tsarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is historically inaccurate. On the one hand, it is indubitable that, at a certain point, *The Protocols* helped to provide a unifying framework for the disparate strands of European antisemitism. At the same time, *The Protocols'* actual contribution to the formation of the Nazi worldview is questionable. For one, it is unclear whether or not Hitler ever read *The Protocols*. In *Mein Kampf*, which Hitler composed in Landsberg prison in 1924, they are only mentioned *once*—and even then, only in passing. While insisting on *The Protocols'* cogency—"What many Jews do unconsciously is here consciously exposed"—in the very next breath, the Führer puts things in perspective by observing that these forgeries merely confirm facts about Jewish existence that are already widely known.⁴³ Hitler references *The Protocols* during the 1940s, in the conversations that were published after the war as *Hitler's Table Talk*. But otherwise, among his voluminous addresses and texts, they remain unmentioned.

The problem is that *The Protocols* cannot bear the explanatory weight with which Trawny seeks to credit them in the formation of Hitler's worldview. As has been well documented, Hitler's Judeophobia crystallized during his five-year stint as an itinerant art student and habitué of pre-World War I Vienna (1908–1913). It was then that he steeped himself in the mystical doctrines of the Ariosophy movement, which vaunted Aryan superiority and stoked fears concerning the racial threat posed by European Jews. As Ian Kershaw argues in his masterful Hitler biography:

[Vienna] was one of the most virulently anti-Jewish cities in Europe. It was a city where, at the turn-of-the-century, radical anti-Semites advocated punishing sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews as sodomy, and placing Jews under surveillance around Easter to prevent ritual child murder. . . . The explicitly anti-Semitic newspaper Hitler read, and singled out for praise, the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, selling around 55,000 copies a day at the time, described Jews as agents of decomposition and corruption, and repeatedly linked them with sexual scandal, perversion, and prostitution. Hitler's description of his gradual exposure through the anti-Semitic gutter press to deep anti-Jewish prejudice and its impact upon him while in Vienna has an authentic ring to it.⁴⁴

Kershaw's remarks support Hitler's contention in *Mein Kampf* that, among convinced antisemites, *The Protocols*, rather than furnishing new information, merely reiterated well-known "truths" about the Jews' diabolical historical proclivities and habitudes.

WAS HEIDEGGER A TRAGIC HERO? (WHAT IS CALLED "ERRING"?)

After the publication of *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, Trawny wrote *Irrnisfuge: Heideggers Anarchie* (Errancy-Fugue: Heidegger's Anarchy). Apparently, the original German title was adjudged unsuitable for English language consumption. The translator and publisher contrived a rather curious and infelicitous substitute: *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy*.⁴⁵

The purpose of this volume is readily discernible from the book's subtitle. By characterizing Heidegger's philosophy as "an-archic,"

Trawny strives to present a version of Heidegger's thought that is diametrically at odds with the philosopher's vehement and, at this point, amply documented commitment to National Socialism. The problem, however, is that such attempts at philosophical revisionism jibe poorly with many of the innermost tendencies of Heideggerian *Seinspolitik*: above all, the Master's concerted reliance on concepts such as *Bodenständigkeit* (Rootedness-in-soil), *Erd und Welt* (Earth and World), and *Raumpolitik* (Spatial Politics)—a Nazi euphemism for the Third Reich's expansionist territorial designs.⁴⁶ In the lexicon of fundamental ontology, all of these notions connote, to various extents and degrees, manifestations of *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity). In *The Black Notebooks* and in other texts, these Heideggerian "existentials" stand in contrast with the "uprooted" (*entwurzelte*) character of free-floating, Jewish cosmopolitan Dasein.

One may summarize Trawny's basic argument as follows: *one cannot very well be a "Nazi" and an "anarchist" at the same time*. Suffice it to say that to characterize a conceptual approach such as Heidegger's—a doctrine that regarded the teachings of the Ionian pre-Socratics as a *fons et origo* (source and origin) of philosophical authenticity—as "an-archic" is both anachronistic and a willful distortion. This is true even if "anarchy" is intended primarily in a philosophical rather than political sense, since the semantic slippages between these two spheres is unavoidable.⁴⁷

Consequently, when juxtaposed, Trawny's two essays present a rather incongruous spectacle. Whereas his intention in *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* was to expose the proximity of Heidegger's thought to the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in *Freedom to Fail* he assiduously pursues a diametrically opposite tack: in the latter text, Trawny's main aim is to absolve Heidegger of any moral responsibility for having politically and philosophically supported National Socialism and its murderous geopolitical aims. (To be sure, among acolytes of the "postmodern Heidegger," "morality," it seems, is so twentieth century . . .)⁴⁸ Thus, in what cannot help but strike the unbiased reader as a curious reversal, many of the criticisms of Heidegger that Trawny conceded in *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, he seeks to parry or revoke in *Freedom to Fail*.

The choice of "Freedom to Fail" as the English language title is also philosophically and ethically fraught. It openly relies on semantic associations and terminological slippages in order to disrupt our

inherited notions of moral and political obligation with the aim of dispelling commonplace assumptions about Heidegger's "guilt" for having eagerly supported, until the bitter end, a criminal political regime. In this respect, one of Trawny's frequent gambits is to adopt a posture of false humility, claiming, in essence: *who are we to judge?* By insinuating that, from the standpoint of a secularized Lutheranism, we are all "guilty," he seeks to parry and defuse accusations and claims that are specifically directed against Heidegger's conduct. By proceeding in this manner, Trawny follows a time-honored "deconstructive" strategy, blurring meaningful distinctions to the point where the very idea of formulating coherent moral and political judgments dissolves. Such judgments and claims stand accused of favoring an "authoritarian" violation of "dissemination" and linguistic "free play." As a result of this conceptual maneuver, it is Heidegger's accusers who are condemned for their intolerance, by virtue of their desire to bring linguistic indeterminacy to a halt. Conversely, those who defend Heidegger emerge as the defenders of "freedom," by virtue of their insistence on the Derridean grammatological prerogatives of semantic ambiguity.

The end result is that, by relying on the deconstructive technique of the "double séance," misdeeds and criminal acts that are, in point of fact, reprehensible—for example, Heidegger's enforcement of *Gleichschaltung* (Nazification) legislation in his capacity as Rector of Freiburg University—are rendered innocuous.⁴⁹ Thereby, the Master is magically exonerated, let off the hook. The element of deception is contained in Trawny's English language title: those who condemn Heidegger's actions stand accused of "illiberalism," insofar as they are opponents of "freedom," re-conceptualized by Trawny as "freedom to fail." Conversely, Heidegger's champions are the genuine advocates of tolerance, since, by avoiding a rush to judgment, they display their open-mindedness, their "liberality."

FROM "TODESFUGE" TO "TODTNAUBERG"

The German title of Trawny's book contains an obvious allusion to Paul Celan's memorable Holocaust poem, "*Todesfuge*" ("Death Fugue"). By choosing "*Todesfuge*" as the title of the 1948 poem that would seal

his reputation as the foremost German language poet of the postwar era, Celan sought to capture a fundamental experiential incongruity of the post-Holocaust world: how to reconcile the high-mindedness of German literary and aesthetic traditions with the barbarism of the Nazi death and concentration camp universe. It was a contradiction that haunted Celan—who took his own life in 1970—until the end of his days. Looking back on the poem's composition, Celan observed that, "[i]n this poem I sought to bring the monstrosity of the gassings to language."⁵⁰

In 1969, a year before Celan's death, a storied meeting between Heidegger and Celan occurred in Todtnauberg, the site of Heidegger's Black Forest ski hut. As is well known, Celan commemorated their fraught encounter in his poem "*Todtnauberg*." An air of despondency pervades Celan's ode insofar as the words of contrition that he had hoped to hear from this titan of German *Denken* never emerged.⁵¹ One of the genuinely disturbing aspects of *Freedom to Fail* is that Trawny treats Celan and Heidegger as *compagnons de route* or *Weggenossen* (companions), thereby implying that they led parallel lives. Trawny also insinuates that both men were "victims"; that, in the end, both men were struck down by the Furies of *Seinsgeschick* or the fate-laden character of Being, which no mere mortal can resist or surmount. Although Celan was a Holocaust survivor and Heidegger argued that, in the camps, the Jews succumbed to the reign of *Technik* that they themselves had unleashed through their preternatural "cunning" and "talent for calculation"—in Trawny's eyes, this makes little difference, notwithstanding the fact that to blur the distinction between victims and executioners is a classic strategy of "Holocaust inversion."⁵²

In English, "*Irrnisfuge*"—Trawny's original German title—might be translated as "Errancy-Fugue." By having selected this title, Trawny alludes to a problematic, self-exonerating dictum that Heidegger uttered following the war: "He who thinks greatly must err greatly."⁵³ Heidegger's assertion is fraught insofar as it betrays his characteristic unwillingness to confront his own, as well as his countrymen's, egregious misdeeds from 1939 to 1945 when the Third Reich sought to redraw the boundaries of Europe according to Nazi race theory. As a profession of philosophical arrogance, Heidegger's declaration posits that the privilege of "greatness" excuses all. By the same token,

Heidegger's statement betrays a fateful lack of self-knowledge. In this respect, it is distinctly un-Socratic.

ATONEMENT BY ASSOCIATION

Trawny's book pursues a questionable interpretive strategy that one might characterize as "atonement by association." Practitioners of this approach propose that, since at various points in his life Heidegger stood in close proximity to prominent Jews, such propinquity should suffice to grant him the status of an honorary philosemite.⁵⁴ For example, the titular allusion to Celan's Holocaust poem in the German original plays on this strategy, which is deceptive insofar as it turns one of Heidegger's major weaknesses—his insensitivity to the "Jewish Question," not to mention his support for a regime that sought to conceive and implement the so-called *Endlösung*—into a putative strength or attribute. Whereas "*Todtnauberg*," its aesthetic merits aside, attests to Heidegger's moral failings—the poet awaits a single word of contrition, which, however, never emerges during the course of their ill-starred encounter—the moral dimension of Heidegger's work is suppressed in the attempt to canonize the Freiburg sage as a progenitor of post-Holocaust Studies.

However, what the "atonement by association" approach conveniently neglects to mention is that, in virtually every instance, the Jewish thinkers who fell within Heidegger's orbit (Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, Karl Löwith, Herbert Marcuse, and Leo Strauss, among others) articulated detailed and insightful critiques of Heidegger's moral and philosophical shortcomings and debilities—failings that played a determinate role in his enthusiastic partisanship for National Socialist *Machtpolitik* (power politics).⁵⁵ Thus, following the collapse of the Weimar Republic and with the benefit of historical hindsight, the affinities between Heidegger's thought and the "German ideology" had become, in their eyes, indubitable.

For example, in "What is Existenz Philosophy?" Arendt alleged that, by exalting concepts such as "Thrownness," "Idle Talk," and "Falling," Heidegger's existential ontology glorified a rigid, Hobbesian functionalism that was diametrically opposed to Kantian aspirations

toward human autonomy and spontaneity.⁵⁶ Similarly, in a late interview on "Heidegger's Politics," Marcuse observed that Heidegger's *Angst*-laden and joyless *Existenzphilosophie* was grist for the mill of the authoritarian personality.⁵⁷ At this point, such criticisms have been widely debated, discussed, and disseminated. Nevertheless, it seems that Trawny has gone out of his way to ignore these astute and knowledgeable criticisms, which were, after all, made by Heidegger "insiders."⁵⁸ Here, one of Nietzsche's maxims seems pertinent: "One repays a teacher poorly by remaining a disciple."

Similarly, Trawny might have chosen to reflect on the critical observations that Heidegger's mentor, Edmund Husserl, formulated during the late 1920s upon a careful reading of *Being and Time*. In his marginal notes, Husserl expressed an acute sense of philosophical betrayal upon discerning that Heidegger had surrendered the project of transcendental phenomenology to the demons of *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life). After all: how might one warrant philosophical concepts such as *der Augenblick* (Moment of Vision), *Ruf des Gewissens* (Call of Conscience), or *einen Helden zu wählen* (Choosing One's Hero), all of which figure prominently in Division II of *Being and Time*? In a lecture on "Phenomenology and Anthropology," Husserl criticized Heidegger for proposing that the "true foundation of philosophy" could derive from *Jemeinigkeit*: "an eidetic doctrine of one's own concrete-worldly existence." Husserl's point was that, by deliberately devaluing the precepts of "mind" and "thinking substance," Heidegger had set the bar of transcendental phenomenology too low, in essence, negating the epistemological mission of First Philosophy in favor of anthropology. Thereby, Heidegger sacrificed the aims of eidetic phenomenology in favor of a series of crude, indemonstrable, empirical notions—the so-called "Existentials." In Husserl's view, Heidegger's recourse to *Existenzphilosophie* was tantamount to epistemic regression insofar as it surrendered the aims of transcendental subjectivity in favor of *Dasein*-as-such or mere "factual life."⁵⁹

At times, in seeking to defend the Freiburg philosopher's legacy at all costs, Trawny's intervention allows Heidegger apologetics to descend even further. For example, Trawny contends that the "history of Being" is an ontological-historical chiaroscuro of "truth" and "error." Consequently, when questions of practical reason are at stake,

human insight and responsibility play a negligible role in determining outcomes. Following Heidegger, Trawny proposes instead that it is ultimately the mysterious and inscrutable *Schickungen des Seins* (sendings of Being) that account for the “events” that take place in the sublunary sphere of human affairs. It is in this spirit that Trawny, in the passage that follows, explicates the *Irrnisfuge* or “freedom to fail” leitmotif with reference to Heideggerian philosophy: “With respect to the truth of Being, not only is error [*Irre*] unavoidable, it inheres in the essential possibility of truth itself. . . . *Fidelity to Thinking (Denken) is fidelity to error.*”⁶⁰ Upon reflection, Trawny’s assertion qualifies both as a strategy of immunization as well as an elaborate form of question begging. What Trawny refuses to explain is why Heidegger’s “errors” are excusable, whereas those of lesser thinkers are not?

As the philosopher Ulrich Greiner has astutely remarked: “[Heidegger’s] statement [“To think greatly, one must err greatly”], instead of showing remorse, betrays overbearing arrogance.”⁶¹ The unpalatable consequences of this excessive reliance on the notions of *Schicksal* (fate) and *Geschick* (destiny)—“Existentials” that figure prominently in Division II of *Being and Time*—as explanatory concepts are not hard to fathom or discern. Basing oneself on such “Existentials,” it becomes virtually impossible to actualize the “ethics of responsibility” that Max Weber espoused in “Politics as Vocation.” Or as Hannah Arendt remarked in “What is Existence Philosophy?”: when all is said and done, Heidegger’s aversion to the Kantian “autonomy of reason” fetishizes human dependency. As such, it stands as the ontological corollary of Hobbes’s dictum in the *Leviathan*: *Auctoritas non veritas facit legem* (Authority, not truth, makes law).⁶² Arendt was correct in identifying Heidegger’s “ontological fatalism” as one of the central debilities of his philosophy. Consequently, what makes *Freedom to Fail* so frustrating and disappointing is that it is precisely this aspect of Heidegger’s thought that Trawny embraces and glorifies.

If, as Heidegger suggested on numerous occasions, the “sendings of Being,” rather than the clear-sightedness of human reason, are all-determinant, then questions of moral and political responsibility become immaterial. This was precisely the strategy of self-exoneration that Heidegger pursued following the war as his philosophy

completed the "turn" from *Entschlossenheit* (decisiveness) to *Gelassenheit* (releasement).⁶³

In "What is Called Thinking?," Heidegger himself proposed that history is best understood as "errancy."⁶⁴ Or as Trawny, echoing the Master, contends in *Freedom to Fail*: "In the truth of being, errancy is not only inevitable; it belongs as an essential possibility to truth itself."⁶⁵ In this way, Trawny apes Heidegger's efforts to endow his own rather crude political "error" with an aura of metaphysical pseudo-profundity qua *Irrnis*. Heidegger's tendency to ontologically exalt the mundane bespeaks a capacity for self-mystification—a habitude that Günter Anders felicitously criticized in "On the Pseudo-Concreteness of Heidegger's Philosophy" and that Theodor Adorno deftly exposed in *The Jargon of Authenticity*.⁶⁶

Appealing to *Irrnis* as a type of ontological-historical warrant, Trawny goes on to assert that, instead of being criticized or censured for his political error, Heidegger should be lauded as a "tragic hero." In fact, pursuing what might be described as an interpretive *Flucht nach vorne* (the best defense is a good offense), he goes on to praise Heidegger as a latter-day Oedipus. As Trawny observes in what one can only adjudge as a prodigious instance of judgmental myopia: "If Oedipus did not err, the plot, his action would not be tragic."⁶⁷ In other words: Oedipus at Thebes, Heidegger at Nuremburg: *même combat*.

So besotted is Trawny with the pseudo-profundities of Heideggerian Denken that the fundamental differences between the two cases, Oedipus and Heidegger, escape him. Whereas Oedipus' transgressions were a literary construct, Heidegger's, conversely, were all too real. More to the point: at issue in Heidegger's case was the philosopher's engagement on behalf of a regime that was inherently genocidal and for which "crimes against humanity" had become a state-sanctioned, everyday occurrence. From a historical point of view, one would be hard pressed to discover parallels with the brutality of the *Einsatzgruppen* that the Nazis unleashed on the lands of Eastern Europe. However, as I noted earlier, Heidegger's overriding fear, as expressed in *The Black Notebooks*, was that National Socialist criminality *would not go far enough*, that such brutality would be sublimated in accordance with higher philosophical ideals.⁶⁸

In hazarding the flawed comparison between Heidegger and the protagonist of Sophocles' literary masterpiece, Trawny's operative assumption is that the arbitrariness of fate rose up to humble Heidegger, just as it had in Oedipus' case. But the parallel very quickly loses its cogency insofar as Heidegger's partisanship for Nazism, far from being an "error" or a fate-laden *Ereignis*, was an intentional act on his part. In other words, if it was an act of "destiny," it was a destiny that Heidegger himself had consciously chosen. The suggestion that we revere Heidegger as a tragic hero is the stuff of crude apologetics. As such, it dishonors tragedy as well as "heroism" as a manifestation of human excellence. Heidegger lacked the nobility of character necessary to qualify as tragic. As Hannah Arendt remarked in a letter to Karl Jaspers: Heidegger "lies notoriously always and everywhere, and whenever he can."⁶⁹ As a political actor, he was both maladroit and small-minded. As Karl Löwith commented, Heidegger "failed to notice the destructive radicalism of the whole [National Socialist] movement and the petty bourgeois character of all its 'strength through joy' [*Kraft durch Freude*] institutions, because he himself was a radical petty bourgeois."⁷⁰

To qualify as "tragic," one must tumble from great heights. Yet, Heidegger's character never rose to such an exalted level. In truth, there was very little that might be viewed as "tragic" about his alacritous participation in a regime that "murdered millions of Jews—simply because they were Jews—that made terror into an everyday phenomenon, and that turned everything that pertains to the ideas of spirit, freedom, and truth into its bloody opposite."⁷¹ Shabby—yes. Tragic—hardly.

In *Freedom to Fail*, Trawny also praises Heidegger effusively for his willingness to "take risks." However, to praise risk-taking in the abstract, apart from the specific ends to which the risks are directed, constitutes "decisionism," purely and simply. Decisionism demands that one abstract from the specific ends of action. It proposes that, rather than judging conduct by altruistic criteria such as the golden rule, what counts above all is *the force of will with which one decides*. Given the Front Generation's widespread disillusionment with higher ideals, during the 1920s, decisionism was able to make great inroads among "conservative revolutionary" intellectuals and publicists.⁷²

Supplementing his elegy to Heidegger the "risk-taker," Trawny appends an additional layer of mystification by exalting Heidegger

as a "philosopher of an-archic freedom." As Trawny observes: "The an-archic freedom of thinking demands, as an-archic questioning, 'freedom for error.' To venture this freedom liberates one from science and liberates one for history. An-archic thinking goes on an odyssey [Irrfahrt]. . . . Being without error is technical routine [in which] [t]hinking ceases."⁷³ This passage constitutes a breathtaking display of philosophical arrogance. Admittedly, these are harsh words; but under the circumstances, nothing less will do.

In essence, Trawny divides the history of philosophy in two. Approaches that refrain from taking the (in retrospect, quite foolish) risks that Heidegger took during the 1930s are consigned to the nether regions of "technical routine." In almost the same breath, Trawny asserts that Heidegger's *Irrnisfahrt*—a euphemism for the philosopher's National Socialist involvements—led away from "Science" (bad) toward the Promised Land of "History" (good). However, in view of the execrable historical choices that Heidegger made during the 1930s, there would seem little cause to rejoice. Time and again, instead of acknowledging Heidegger's shortcomings, Trawny exalts them by according them an ontological dignity that is entirely undeserved. In this and other respects, *Freedom to Fail* abandons aspirations to serious scholarship and devolves into hero-worship.

At the same time, one wonders with what justification can one describe as "anarchic," or as in any meaningful sense inclined toward "freedom," a philosophy like Heidegger's that is at such pains to glorify modalities of ontological fatalism? As we have seen, one of the central aims of the *Dasein-Analyse* in *Being and Time* is to subordinate aspirations toward theoretical and moral autonomy to a series of finite and inescapable ontological-historical encumbrances. Trawny's assurances to the contrary notwithstanding, in Heidegger's existential ontology the longing for human freedom has been systematically stifled, insofar as authentic Selfhood and Being-with-others (*Mitsein*) are consistently sacrificed to the fateful imperatives of *Seinsgeschichte*.

Another Heidegger student, Hans Jonas, astutely exposed the failings of this dimension of Heidegger's work when he characterized the "history of Being" as "fate-laden in every sense." Jonas concludes by aptly observing that, "neither then nor now did Heidegger's thought provide a *norm* by which to decide how to answer such calls."⁷⁴ For

those who remain perplexed, *The Black Notebooks* offer a good indication of "Heideggerian normativity."

In order to gain an additional measure of sympathy for Heidegger, Trawny portrays him as a "sacrificial victim" of *Geschichtlichkeit* (historicity): as a pawn of historical forces that were beyond his control. As Trawny asserts: "[W]ho are those who 'truly decline' [*untergeben*]? They are those who recognize in the choreography of tragic being that the decline [*Untergang*] must happen. Those who decline comply, they hearken to the poetic rhythm of being, they are ripe for sacrifice."⁷⁵ Here, Trawny implies that Heidegger's nobility derives from his having succumbed to a world-historical process of "decline" as described by Spengler and like-minded *Zivilisationskritiker*. What makes Heidegger's fate "tragic" is that, ultimately, he fell victim to a destiny or *Geschick* that was beyond the capacity of mere mortals to master or to resist. On these grounds, Trawny would have us believe, à la Nietzsche, that Heidegger's case is "beyond good and evil." Hence in the last analysis, it is inadmissible to judge his conduct according to standards that apply to mere commoners or the *hoi polloi*. Ultimately, critics who wish to saddle him with responsibility for his actions are trapped in the obsolete, pre-Heideggerian paradigm of the "metaphysics of subjectivity."

In support of his case, Trawny invokes Heidegger's doctrine of *Seinsgeschick* (destining of Being). According to this notion, salvation and hellfire are elements of a primordial *polemos* or ontological strife that, willing or not, determines the human condition. As Heidegger remarks: "Both salvation and perdition are able to come to presence only insofar as Being itself is riven with strife."⁷⁶ Thus, according to the precepts of *Seinsgeschick*, neither Heidegger nor his fellow Germans need assume responsibility for their actions. They, too, are "victims."

However, as the philosopher Werner Marx has stressed, the flaws inherent in Heidegger's embrace of *Irrnis* speak directly to the question of his partisanship for National Socialism. After all, if from an ontological-historical perspective "truth" and "error" are equiprimordial, hence, ineluctably intertwined, it is by no means clear why one should privilege "truth" over "error". Following Nietzsche, Heidegger's re-reading of the history of philosophy suggested that the

preference for "truth" over "error" was a nefarious legacy of Platonism. Like Nietzsche's "Last Man," those who failed to surmount this prejudice proved inadequate to the challenges of "self-overcoming."

When all is said and done, did not Heidegger's rejection of inherited conceptions of truth, morality, and justice play a significant role in his attraction to the Nazi behemoth as a radical political solution that would mercifully bring the "decline of the West" to a halt? Did not Heidegger's obdurate scorn for the Tradition becloud his capacity for political judgment?

In this respect, Heidegger's doctrine of "errancy," instead of serving to exculpate Heidegger, helps us to better understand the philosophical motivations underlying his fateful political choice. The ever-present danger is that if "truth" and "error" are, as Heidegger claims, ontologically-historically covalent, acquiescence to "error" merely becomes the price we must pay for submitting to the "destiny of Being" qua "errancy." As Marx explains:

That the "National Socialist Revolution" as the "total transformation of our German *Dasein*" could only take place violently, and that it was pervaded by evil as well as by error and sham, for Heidegger might thus have simply resulted from an "occurrence of truth." And it might have for him been merely a consequence of the coordination of evil and good in the clearing [*Lichtung*] of Being, such that the founders of the state followed the directives of evil without his being able to hold them guilty on the basis of "moral considerations." These references touch on the difficult and disturbing problem of [Heidegger's] relationship to National Socialism and the effect of his related speeches, writings, and actions insofar as they cast doubt on the often heard view that he "erred" with regard to the violence and the evil of the National Socialist Revolution. On the contrary, he must have a priori assessed it correctly, since he viewed it as an "occurrence of truth."⁷⁷

What stands out as especially macabre is that, insofar as Heidegger identified "world Jewry" as the main culprit driving the world-historical process of "machination"—the technological reduction of all Being to "standing reserve"—according to this perspective, Heidegger and

the Germans were ultimately *victims of the Jews*. However, to blur the lines between perpetrators and victims in this manner is to practice “Holocaust inversion,” insofar as it insinuates that the Jews were the “executioners” and the “Germans” their victims. As historical experience has taught, in almost every case, “Holocaust inversion” is a first step on the path to Holocaust denial.

NOTES

1. See the important article by Adam Soboczynski, “Was heisst ‘N. soz.’,” *Die Zeit*, March 26, 2015. See also the commentary and exposé by former Heidegger student, Rainer Marten, “Gralshüter mit letzter Treuebereitschaft,” *Die Zeit*, March 12, 2015, 51.

2. See Martin Heidegger “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,” *Sein und Wahrheit*, GA 36/37 (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag, 2001), 89.

3. In a commentary published in the German philosophy journal *Hohe Luft*, I sought to expose the shortcomings of the various Heidegger editions. See my article, “J’accuse: Eine Antwort an Vittorio Klostermann,” in *Hohe Luft Magazine*, November 2, 2015. For a more general discussion of the systematic shortcomings of the *Gesamtausgabe* Edition-praxis, see Theodore Kiesel, “Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*: An International Scandal of Scholarship,” *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1995): 3–13. The notion of “scandal” in relation to the editorial practices afflicting the GA has resurfaced recently in the article by philosopher Rainer Marten, “Grabhalter mit letzter Treuebereitschaft” (*Die Zeit*, March 18, 2015). As Marten observes: “For years, the GA editors have held Heidegger’s work hostage. This is a scandal, which must be brought to an end.”

4. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953). See the article by Rainer Marten, “Ein rassistisches Konzept von Humanität,” *Badische Zeitung* (December 17, 1987): 19–22. In the article, Marten, who was Heidegger’s assistant at the time, avows that he was present when the philosopher redacted, and thereby falsified, the lecture manuscript as described.

5. See Kellerer, “Rewording the Past: The Postwar Publication of a 1935 Lecture by Martin Heidegger,” *Modern Intellectual History* 113, (2014): 575–602.

6. See Eggert Blum, “Die Marke Heidegger,” *Die Zeit*, November 27, 2014.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. GA 40 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988).
8. Martin Heidegger, *Logik als Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*. GA 38 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1998), 40.
9. See Wolfgang Schirmacher, *Technik und Gelassenheit: Zeitkritik nach Heidegger* (Freiburg: Karl Albert Verlag, 1983), 25; 99.
10. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958), viii–ix: “And if it is true that in the final stages of totalitarianism an absolute evil appears (absolute because it can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives), it is also true that without it we might never have known the truly radical nature of evil.”
11. Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V*, GA 97 (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag, 2015), 99–100.
12. See Adam Soboczynski, “Was heisst ‘N. Soz.’?” *Die Zeit* 13, March 26, 2015; see also, Julia Ireland, “Naming Physis and the ‘Inner Truth of National Socialism’: A New Archival Discovery,” *Research in Phenomenology* 44, (2014): 315–346.
13. Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, GA 69, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag, 1998), xx.
14. Cited in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 469.
15. See my article, “J’accuse: eine Antwort auf Vittorio Klostermann,” *Hohe Luft: Philosophie Zeitschrift*, November 2, 2015.
16. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII–XV*. GA 96. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2015), 46. See Adolf Hitler, *Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen*. Vol. 4. Max Domarus, ed. (Mundelein, Illinois: Bolchazy Carducci, 1988), 1663.
17. Peter Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, trans. A. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
18. See the detailed account of the French controversy and the criticism of Trawny by Eric Aeschmann, “‘Les Cahiers noirs’: vers une nouvelle affaire Heidegger,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 7, 2013. See also, François Rastier, “Il n’y a pas d’affaire Heidegger,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, March 7, 2014; and Jürg Altwegg, “Antisemitismus bei Heidegger: Ein Debakel für Frankreichs Philosophie,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 13, 2013.
19. For an account, see my essay, “French Heidegger Wars,” in *The Heidegger Controversy*, 272–300.

20. Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: L'Introduction du Nazisme dans la philosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005); Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, trans. M. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
21. See Eric Aeschmann, "'Cahiers Noirs': vers une nouvelle Affaire Heidegger," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 7, 2013.
22. Ibid.
23. Hadrian France-Lanord, ed., *Dictionnaire Martin Heidegger* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2014).
24. Répliques par Alain Finkielkraut, "Du bon usage de Martin Heidegger," July 12, 2013, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.franceculture.fr/emission-repliques-du-bon-usage-de-martin-heidegger-2013-12-07>
25. Thomas Assheuer, "Das Vergiftete Erbe," *Die Zeit*, March 21, 2014.
26. Emmanuel Faye, "Pour l'ouverture des archives Heidegger," *Le Monde*, January 4, 2006.
27. See Paul-Francois Paoli, "Gallimard renonce à publier un livre sur Heidegger," *Le Figaro*, September 29, 2006. The book was published as *Heidegger à plus fort raison*, ed., Francois Fédier (Paris: Fayard, 2007).
28. See, for example, my essay, "Heidegger's *Schwarze Hefte*: Nationalsozialismus, Weltjudentum, und Seinsgeschichte," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Summer, 2015): 379–411. See also the indispensable collection of critical essays, *Martin Heidegger, "Schwarze Hefte": Eine Philosophisch-Politische Debatte*, Marion Heinz and Sidonie Kellerer, eds. (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016).
29. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII–XI*. GA 95, 408–09.
30. Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, 2.
31. See Michelle Cohen-Halévy and Francis Cohen, *Le Cas Trawny: à propos des cahiers noirs de Heidegger* (Paris: Sens et Tonka, 2016): "La révélation de l'antisémitisme inscrit dans l'œuvre de Heidegger est d'autant plus affirmée par lui qu'il a secrètement pour dessein d'en dissimuler les enjeux" (12).
32. See Martin Brozsat's essay, "Die Völkische Ideologie und der Nationalsozialismus," *Deutsche Rundschau* 84 (1958): 53–68, which demonstrates, beyond a reasonable doubt, the endemically porous nature of National Socialist ideology.
33. Most of these texts have been collected in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993); see especially, 29–66.
34. See Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1988).

35. Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, 4.
36. For an elaboration, see my interview "Heidegger hielt 'Endlösung' für notwendig," *Hohe Luft*, March 23, 2015.
37. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII–XV*. GA 96, 108: "Der weit vorauswesende Augenblick der Entscheidung zum Wesen der Geschichte—ist den Deutschen zugesprochen."
38. *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus: Positionen im Widerstreit*, eds. Walter Homolka and Arnulf Heidegger (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2016). See also, Adam Soboczynski and Alexander Cammann, "Martin Heidegger: Ein moralisches Desaster," *Der Spiegel*, October 12, 2016.
39. For more on Fischer, see Ott, *Martin Heidegger*, 155, 282. As Ott shows, it was Fischer who intervened on Heidegger's behalf toward the end of the war in order to secure his release from the *Volksturm*—the overage brigades whose lives were irresponsibly squandered toward the war's end.
40. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI*. GA 94 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014), 194.
41. See Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII–XV*, GA 96.
42. *Ibid.*, 256.
43. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Mariner Books, 1971), 307.
44. Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 42–43.
45. Peter Trawny, *Irrnisfuge: Heideggers Anarchie* (Berlin: Mathes & Seitz, 2014); *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy*, trans. by I. Moore and C. Turner (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015).
46. For the influence of *Raumpolitik* on the Nazi worldview, see David Thomas Murphy, *The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918–1933* (Kent, OH: Kent University Press, 1997).
47. The model and inspiration for this interpretation was provided by Reiner Schurmann's *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Although Schurmann's central thesis concerning the "an-archic" nature of Heidegger's thought is fallacious, the details of his interpretation are, nevertheless, edifying and illuminating.
48. For an exposé of the postmodern Heidegger, see Johannes Fritsche, "From National Socialism to Postmodernism: Löwith on Heidegger," *Constellations* 16, no.1 (2009): 85–105.
49. See Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983): 173–185. See also, Cohen-Halimi and Cohen, *Le Cas Peter Trawny*, 28: "Trawny's goal is a distortion and de-realization of language, of the semantics in which the history

of Nazi barbarism is most profoundly inscribed. He seeks to detach these words from their history in order to make them speak the [Heideggerian] language of 'historicity' instead."

50. Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*, see notes to translator's introduction.

51. For an account, see John Felsteiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 244–253.

52. See Robert S. Wistrich, "The Holocaust Inversion of the Left," in Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, The Jews and Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2012).

53. Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Row, 1975), 9.

54. See also the essay by Babette Babich, "Heidegger et ses juifs," in "Heidegger et 'les Juifs,'" *La Règle du Jeu* 58/59, (September 2015): 627–652.

55. I have treated this theme in *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). In an extended preface to the second edition, I have included discussions of Franz Rosenzweig, Emmanuel Levinas, and Leo Strauss.

56. Hannah Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy?," *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 178: "Behind Heidegger's ontological approach lies a functionalism not unlike Hobbes's realism. . . . Heidegger's functionalism and Hobbes' realism both end up proposing a model of human being that says man would function even better in a preordained world because he would then be 'freed' of all spontaneity."

57. Herbert Marcuse, "Heidegger and Politics: An Interview," in *Heideggerian Marxism*, eds. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 169–170: "If you look at Heidegger's view of human existence . . . you will find a highly repressive, highly oppressive interpretation: 'idol talk, curiosity, ambiguity, falling and being thrown into, concern, being-toward-death, anxiety, dread, boredom,' and so on. Now this gives a picture which plays well on the fears and frustrations of men and women in a repressive society—a joyless existence: overshadowed by death and anxiety; human material for the authoritarian personality."

58. See for example, the volume *Heidegger, die Juden—noch einmal*, Peter Trawny, ed. (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag, 2015).

59. In addition, the reactions of Heidegger's mentor, Edmund Husserl, following his sustained reading of *Being and Time* during the summer of 1929, are also well worth considering. The overall goal or telos of Husserl's

philosophy was to preserve the autonomy of reason. He makes this point undeniably clear in his later work on *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), as well in his Vienna lecture of 1936, "The Crisis of European Humanity," 269–300. In essence, following his close reading of *Being and Time* (Husserl's extensive marginalia have been made available in *Husserliana*), Husserl felt an acute sense of personal betrayal, and that, theoretically speaking, Heidegger had, in essence, surrendered the project of transcendental phenomenology to the "demons" of *Lebensphilosophie*. After all: how does one warrant or legitimate philosophical concepts such as "Moment of Vision," "Call of Conscience," or "Choosing One's Hero," all of which figure prominently in Division II of *Being and Time*. Specifically, in a 1931 lecture on "Phenomenology and Anthropology," Husserl criticized Heidegger for his conviction that the "true foundation of philosophy" derives from "an eidetic doctrine of one's concrete-worldly existence." In other words, in his scorn of "mind" and *res cogitans*, Heidegger had set the bar of transcendental phenomenology much too low. As the title of Husserl's lecture suggests: by taking Being-in-the-world as his point of departure, Heidegger had negated first philosophy in favor of "anthropology," and in Husserl's view, this chess move was tantamount to *regression*, insofar as it surrendered transcendental subjectivity in favor of *Existenz* or "factual life." But wasn't the entire point of first philosophy to surmount sheer existence in favor of "certainty" and "truth" and thereby, as it were, to raise the bar. In January 1931, Husserl wrote to the philosopher Dietrich Mahnke: "I came to the conclusion that [Heidegger's] 'phenomenology' has nothing to do with mine and that I view his pseudo-scientificity as an obstacle to the development of philosophy . . . I separate my phenomenology completely from Heidegger's so-called phenomenology." Husserl, *Briefwechsel* III, 473. See Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendent Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger* (1927–1931), trans. T. Sheehan and R. E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997). Husserl's lecture on "Philosophy and Anthropology" is included in the appendix (485–501). The volume also contains Husserl's marginalia to *Being and Time* as well as to *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

60. Peter Trawny, *Irrnisfuge: Heideggers Anarchie* (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2014), 23, 30; emphasis added. How one might reconcile Heidegger's option for the Third Reich—which was, after all, a *political dictatorship*—with the allegation contained in Trawny's subtitle that Heidegger's philosophy is best interpreted as "an-archic" is anyone's guess. A philosophy that continually subordinates "events" to the *Seinsgeschick* (destiny of Being) cannot justifiably

be considered "an-archic." For the English translation, see Trawny, *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 50.

61. Ulrich Greiner, "Darf gross irren, wer gross dichtet?" *Die Zeit* 24 (June 8, 2006).

62. See note 35.

63. See Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger and Georg Friedrich Jünger, 1920–1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007).

64. Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and ed. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Row, 1971).

65. Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*, 50.

66. Günter Anders, "On the Pseudo-Concreteness of Heidegger's Philosophy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8, no. 3 (1948): 337–371. See Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. K. Tarnowski (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

67. Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*, 50.

68. See note 25.

69. See Elzabietta Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 27.

70. Karl Löwith, "My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936," in the *Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, 142.

71. Herbert Marcuse, "Letter to Heidegger of August 28, 1947," in the *Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, 162.

72. See the classic study by Christian Graf von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung: Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1988).

73. See Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*, 63.

74. Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," in *The Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Delta Publishing, 1966), 247.

75. Trawny, *Freedom to Fail*, 46.

76. Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977), 359: "Beide, das Heil und das Grimmige, können jedoch im Sein nur wesen, insofern das Sein selber das Strittige ist."

77. Werner Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition*, trans. Theodore Kisiel and Murray Greene (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 251.

RICHARD WOLIN is Distinguished Professor of History, Political Science, and Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center. He also

taught at the University of Paris-X, the University of Nantes, and Shanghai University. Among his books are: *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse; The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*; and, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*, which was listed by the *Financial Times* as one of the best books of 2012. He frequently writes on intellectual and political themes for the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, and *Dissent*.