

Heidegger's Typewriter

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ABSTRACT: The discovery of a 1932 typewriter apparently signed by Heidegger raises questions about its authenticity and purpose, and prompts us to reconsider the validity of Heidegger's portrayal of typewriters as devices that alienate writing from the hand and exemplify the modern oblivion of being.

KEYWORDS: concealment, language, technology, typewriters, writing

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The *Schreibmaschine*, a device for mechanical writing, distances writing from its essence as “hand-writing” (GA 54: 125/85). Surely, then, Martin Heidegger would never deign to own a typewriter. Or if he did, it would have to be an authentic, autochthonous, earthly, hand-pro-duced Thing, such as the home-whittled contraption that Tyrolean amateur inventor Peter Mitterhofer constructed in the 1860s and trundled to Vienna in a wheelbarrow.¹



Fig. 1. Replica of a Mitterhofer typewriter

But I have concluded that Heidegger did own a modern, mass-produced, mechanical writing machine: a 1932 Urania-Piccola portable. And thereby hangs a tale.

THE DISCOVERING

On April 8, 2020, in the midst of the first planetary upsurge of the novel coronavirus, a friend alerted me to an eBay auction for a typewriter that might have been Heidegger's. But the seller did not claim to be certain of the machine's provenance:

This typewriter has a signature...that seems to be the signature of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Therefore this machine may have belonged to the German philosopher. I bought this typewriter 8 years ago from Germany. After it has arrived at my house, I have cleaned the machine because it was very dirty [and during] the cleaning, I found that it was signed with a letter that is barely identifiable... We have verified that it was very possibly that the signature in question belongs to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger...I can't really understand why a philosopher who didn't like typewriters (the technology of his time) could have signed one of them...The question remains in the realm of time and speculation... apparently the signature is possibly authentic...However, its authenticity can only be considered as possible, although all the historical data coincide.²

In other words, the signature was a phenomenon, a self-showing appearance, but its apparent reference to an inapparent, vanished entity – the man Martin Heidegger – might be showing itself as something other than what it truly was. Perhaps the reference was a semblance, a “privative modification of [a] phenomenon” (GA 2: 39/SZ 29).⁵

For all its ambiguity, the signature had stimulated the seller to follow in the footsteps of Dasein-that-was, retrieving Heidegger's own “possibility of existence” (GA 2: 509/SZ 385):

I offer this machine with regret, because it is the most important machine in my collection and in fact, I did not want to sell it, because this machine was the reason why I decided to do historical research in the field of philosophical thought. This typewriter...has motivated me to write my 4 books that I will publish after the present crisis.

After a brief hesitation, I entered an ecstatic moment of vision (GA 2: 447/SZ 338) and resolutely chose to click the “Buy It Now” button.

In the seller’s subsequent correspondence with me, he explained that he was a Chilean historian living in Romania. He had bought the typewriter from a Romani antique dealer who had picked it up in Freiburg. The historian uncovered and finally deciphered the inscription that read “M. Heidegger.” While he was never certain that the signature was genuine, he was inspired enough by it to study Heidegger and to release the typewriter from presence-at-hand into readiness-to-hand by using it to write an ontology of his own.

The typewriter arrived safely at my home on July 10, 2020. It is in good condition, but the paint on the panel in front of the typebars and on the front frame has been touched up, suggesting extensive use, and the shift lock key is missing.

The writing machine is an Urania-Piccola Model R, serial number 110482, manufactured by Clemens Müller AG in Dresden. The company began in 1855 as a sewing machine factory. It introduced the Urania standard typewriter in 1909. The Perkeo, a little portable typewriter based on the Standard Folding, appeared in 1912, and the Urania-Piccola, an original portable design, was introduced in 1925 and produced until 1935. It is not a rare model, but it does have some quirks: its carriage return lever is on the right – a very uncommon arrangement on a portable – and the ribbon color selection lever is on the left side. In addition to the regular Model R, the company offered a simplified Model S and a Model T with tabulator. A similar mechanical design continued as the Klein-Urania (1935-43, 1947-49) in a more streamlined body.⁴

The 44-key German QWERTZ keyboard on this specimen has the ability to type in French (with the characters ç é ` ^) and includes some other somewhat unusual symbols (§ ¹/ + =); this layout is found on other examples of this model.⁵



Fig. 2. Urania-Piccola #110482

HEIDEGGER'S TYPEWRITER



Figs. 3-4. Urania-Piccola #110482

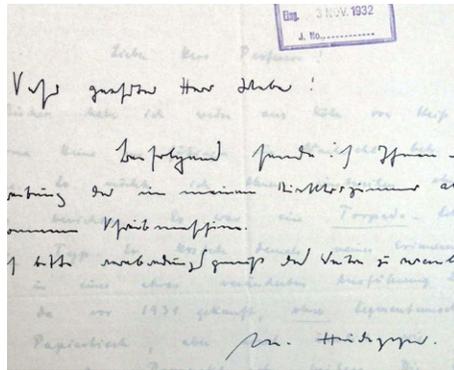
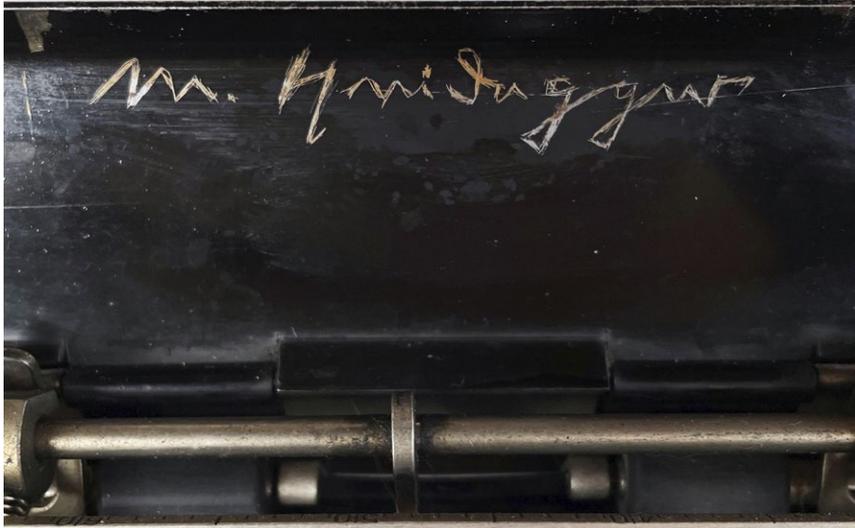
The Urania trademark, representing a map of the heavens, is reproduced in two decals above the keyboard. A decal on the back tells us that the typewriter was sold by Strangfeld, an office machine dealer and service center located at Potsdamer Straße 87 in Berlin. The uncommon name Strangfeld literally means a field of strands or cords.⁶



Fig. 5. Strangfeld dealer decal

The name “M. Heidegger” is scratched into an inconspicuous place, the back of the paper table (the surface where the paper lies as it is fed into the machine), where it would often be hidden behind the two prongs of the folding paper rest. The name is written in the style of *Kurrentschrift* cursive that Heidegger used, and it is a good match for examples of his signature in ink on paper, considering the different writing technique that has to be used for inscriptions on metal. The metal is slightly rusty where its protective coat of paint has been scratched off.

HEIDEGGER'S TYPEWRITER



Figs. 6-8. Signatures on the typewriter and on a handwritten note from 1932 (University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349)

But is the signature a case of appearing as being, or appearing as semblance? Did M. Heidegger himself handle this typewriter?

THE EXPROPRIATING

It would not be particularly difficult for someone to forge Heidegger's signature. But who would think of scratching the name of the technoskeptical Heidegger in a hidden location on a typewriter? This seems like an implausible form of fraud.

But a stronger reason that convinces me that it was Heidegger himself who signed this Urania-Piccola is that its serial number, 110482, dates its manufacture to 1932.⁷ In October of that year, according to documents uncovered by Adam Knowles in the archives of the University of Freiburg, a Torpedo portable typewriter that Heidegger's assistant, Werner Brock, had owned for five years disappeared from Heidegger's office (*Direktorzimmer*), seemingly during some time when the room was unexpectedly left unlocked to give access to a crew that was renovating the building ahead of schedule. A typewriter was a useful and valuable entity in the hands of Heidegger's assistant, allowing the thinker's words to be transferred from handwriting to a medium that was easily legible and (with the help of equipment such as carbon paper) reproducible. Heidegger demanded an investigation, which was documented with true German thoroughness; the records are a mixture of handwriting and typewriting.

In a letter to the university rectorate (Figs. 9–10) dated November 10, 1932 – signed and typewritten, though presumably not by himself – Heidegger expressed his indignation:

I am far from demanding that the district authority bother itself with housekeeping. However, I must see an essential dereliction of duty in the omission of any notification [of the early renovation]; this neglect made impossible the supervision that I considered necessary, and thus made the theft possible – for the missing typewriter supposedly “was not in my director's office,” but I say: it *was* there, and that ought to be enough.⁸

One could say that the former *Da-sein* of the typewriter, its *Dage-wesensein*, grounded the illegitimacy of its absence. The enigmatic

facticity of its thrownness into the room, regardless of whence and wherefore, was sufficient to make it belong in the space where it was, and to make the withdrawal of it an event of expropriation. Of course, strictly speaking, only Dasein and its world, not ready-at-hand entities, are characterized by having-been, facticity, and spatiality; but if equipment can be secondarily historical (GA 2: 504/SZ 381), it can also be secondarily factual and spatial.

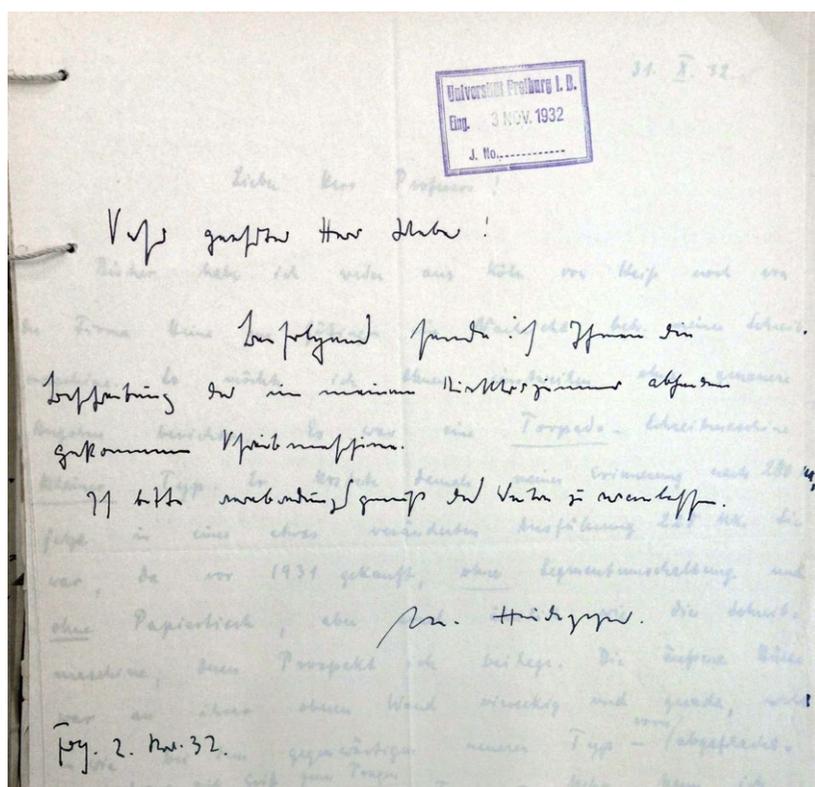


Fig. 8: "I am attaching the description of the typewriter that went missing from my director's room. I ask you to take further action as agreed. M. Heidegger. Freiburg, 2 Nov. 32." University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349.

Freiburg, den 10. November 1932.

Philosophisches Seminar I.
Universität Freiburg.

Universität Freiburg i. B.
Emp. 11. NOV. 1932
J. No. 22278.

An das
Akademische Rektorat der Universität
Freiburg.

Zu der unter d. 7. Nov. d. J. (Nr. I 1007) in Abschrift gegebenen Äusserung des badischen Bezirkbauamtes bemerke ich folgendes:

1. Die Fragen bezüglich der Wiederinstansetzung der Räume des philosophischen Seminars I. waren keineswegs "restlos geklärt". Vielmehr sollte der Anstrich endgültig unter meiner Anwesenheit festgelegt werden. Dazu ist es nicht gekommen. Als ich nämlich rechtzeitig vor dem festgesetzten Termin (22. September) anfragen liess, wann die Bestimmung des Anstrichs vorgenommen werden könne, bekam ich den Überraschenden Bescheid, dass die ganze Renovation überhaupt schon beendet sei.

2. Das Bezirksamt gibt selbst zu, dass es die Arbeit vor dem festgesetzten Termin begonnen hat. Die dafür angegebenen Gründe sind für mich in diesem Fall von

Fig. 9. From the University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349

HEIDEGGER'S TYPEWRITER

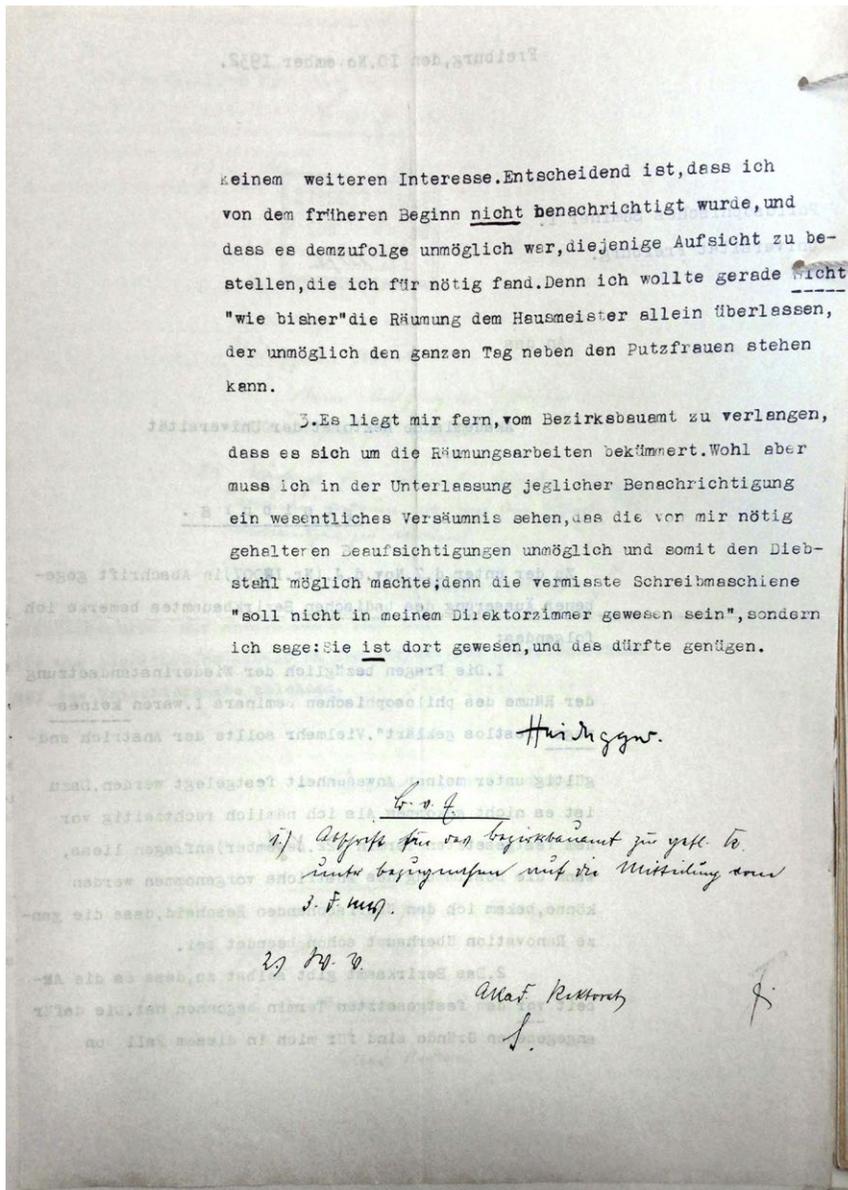


Fig. 10. From the University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349

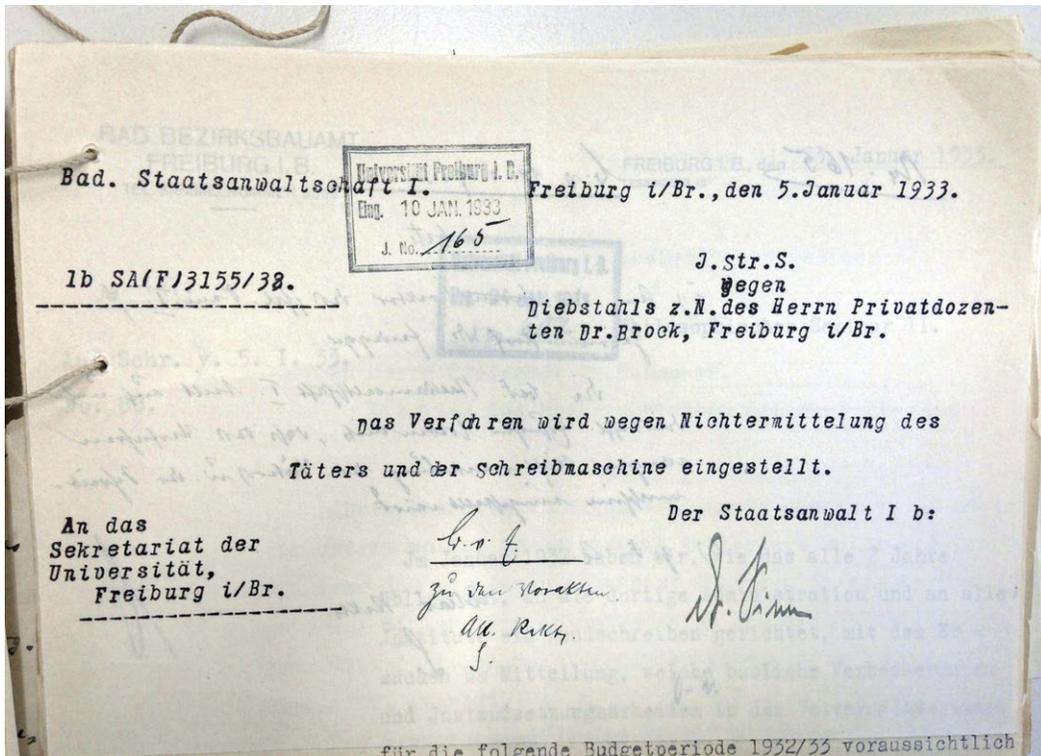


Fig. 11. From the University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349

The case was closed on January 5, 1933, “on account of the nondetection [*Nichtermittelung*] of the culprit and the typewriter.” Twenty-five days later, such trivia were eclipsed when Hitler became chancellor of Germany. By May, Heidegger had joined the Nazi party and become the new rector of the University of Freiburg. Werner Brock, who was half Jewish, emigrated to England with Heidegger’s help,⁹ found a position at Cambridge, and published *An Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy* in 1935 with Cambridge University Press. At Heidegger’s request, Brock wrote an extensive and perceptive introduction to *Existence and Being*, the first collection of Heidegger’s writings in English, which appeared in 1949.¹⁰

I believe that the Urania-Piccola was meant to be the replacement for Brock’s stolen Torpedo. It seems logical that Heidegger, remembering his recent unpleasant brush with crime, signed the machine in an inconspicuous place in order to make it easier to identify in case of another theft.

Did Heidegger personally acquire the typewriter in Berlin? When was it bought? Was he attracted to the name of the dealer, Strangfeld, given that the Heideggerian concept of world could be glossed as a “field of strands,” a webwork of references? Was he attracted to the name Urania, muse of astronomy, because of the classical association of the study of the stars with the philosophical pursuit of truth and being? What were the adventures of this typewriter during and after the war, and how did it end up as a dirty antique, its connection to Heidegger forgotten?¹¹

All we can say with confidence is that Heidegger’s hand inscribed a sign of his own Dasein onto this mechanical *Schreibzeug* (GA 2: 92/SZ 68) or *Zeigzeug* (GA 2: 105–6/SZ 79), in an event of appropriation that marked it as his own, even if its user was to be his assistant. The hidden signature suggests the concealed supremacy of handwriting over machine writing, the secret triumph of the event of inscribing over the system of inscription. This brings us to Heidegger’s thinking on typewriters.

THE CLOUDING

Heidegger's occasional references to typewriters suggest a certain antipathy that is spelled out most clearly in a lecture course of 1942. First let's consider the briefer, more offhand comments.

According to Heidegger's 1919–20 lecture course on phenomenology, we can intend the same content of a book regardless of whether we encounter it in different printed editions or in a typewritten copy (GA 58: 44/36). Here the typewriter seems to be a content-neutral tool for transmitting language.

A similarly inoffensive remark from 1930 points out that a typewriter is not just any tool, but a machine: "Equipment for writing [*Schreibzeug*] can certainly be a machine (a typewriter [*Schreibmaschine*], for example), but it need not be...every machine is a piece of equipment [*Zeug*] although not every piece of equipment is a machine" (GA 29/30: 314/214). We can also make finer distinctions: strictly speaking, a typewriter is a "mechanism" that lies between a tool and a machine (GA 54: 127/86).¹² So far, these are just nonjudgmental categorizations.

In 1935, however, Heidegger introduces the topic in a highly charged context: "A state – it *is*. What does its Being consist in? In the fact that the state police arrest a suspect, or that in a ministry of the Reich so and so many typewriters clatter away [*klappern*] and record the dictation of state secretaries and ministers?" (GA 40: 38/39). The implied answer, obviously, is "no." Heidegger is suggesting that the machinery of Nazi bureaucracy – from typewriters to the Gestapo – is only a superficial derivative of the "inner truth and greatness of this movement" (GA 40: 208/222).

Not only are typewriters epiphenomena, but their obvious noise conceals a less obvious concealing. In a nostalgic text on the occasion of his Aunt Gertrud's eightieth birthday in 1936, Heidegger explains.

[In the old days, the teacher] still wrote with a goose quill and understood how to cut the pen finely. Today, we usually have only the clatter of the typewriter left in our ears, since everything has to go as fast as possible

and everything has to be uniform, so that one can't tell anymore from such writing whether a real man [*ein Kerl*] stands behind it, or a good-for-nothing is hiding behind it. But back then, one still heard the soft, deliberate passage of the goose-quill pen over the pages. (GA 16: 341-42)

There is a manly honesty, a fullness of being, that shines through in handwriting. Deep truth lies in slowness and in silence – which is the very origin of language (GA 36/37: 107/84). One wonders what Heidegger would make of typewriters such as the Remington Noiseless or Continental Silenta, which muffle the sound of typing: is this just a further concealment of concealment?

The *Black Notebooks* of the late thirties refer to “clattering” once again in a passage that reflects Heidegger's growing aversion to the celebration of “primal life” in Nazi ideology:

... people “occupy” themselves with the ancient “symbols”...as if the automobile, simultaneously racing right past such an occupation or even utilized in it and for it, as if the thundering of the dive-bomber, as if the loudspeaker bellowing out from some corner of the world, as if the gigantic movie poster, as if the concomitantly clattering [*mitklappernde*] typewriter – as if all this were nothing or could be measured by this “life” or could be absent even for a second. (GA 95: 415/323)

The suggestion here is that National Socialism, or at least its predominant self-interpretation, is not accidentally equipped with modern technology; modern “machination” (*Machenschaft*) lies at its core, even when it appeals to prehistoric paganism.¹⁵

Typewriters turn up again near the end of the war, in a course on thought and poetry:

The possibility of comparing in the formal sense, regardless of the “content,” is limitless... Someone could,

for example, compare bike-riding and poetizing. What is the same in them consists in the fact that they are both human activities. The difference appears insofar as bike-riding is a bodily activity that uses a machine, whereas poetizing is a mental [*geistig*] activity. To be sure, we occasionally hear that modern poets supposedly poetize directly on a typewriter; in this regard there would also be something the same between bike-riding and poetizing, but they would still remain different insofar as the bicycle and the typewriter are different machines. Although there could still be a lot to discover about what is the same and different in bike-riding and poetizing, we are averse to this comparison. Why? Because bike-riding and poetizing lie too far apart from each other. (GA 50: 137/IP 42)

Heidegger suggests that poetry – language in its most primal form – essentially has nothing to do with machines, and the tone of his reference to composing poetry on a typewriter suggests that it is an outlandish, ridiculous practice; if the phenomenon exists at all, it is hardly worth investigation. He would probably say the same about philosophers who composed on a typewriter.¹⁴ The fact that both cyclists and (some) poets use machines is an example of a proposition that Heidegger likes to call correct but untrue.

Heidegger's most extended commentary on writing machines comes in the unlikely context of his discussion of the pre-Socratic experience of truth and oblivion, in the *Parmenides* lectures of 1942. He claims that this is not a “digression” at all (GA 54: 129/87): truth and being are the very heart of Parmenides' theme; we are given unconcealment and an understanding of being only through the hand and the word, uniquely human gifts (GA 54: 118/80); the combination of hand and word is handwriting, which inscribes the relation between humans and being into beings themselves (GA 54: 125/85); and mechanical writing interferes with the “authentically handling hand” (GA 54: 119/81 tm). In this way, the typewriter tears writing away from its essential home in the

hand; by the same token, it “deprives the hand of its rank in the realm of the written word” (GA 54: 119/81). The typist’s hand leaves no mark of its own presence on the page; in this way, the typewriter conceals character and “makes everyone look the same” (GA 54: 119/81). Furthermore, the typewriter “degrades the word to a means of communication” by promoting “speed reading” (GA 54: 119/81). Typed text is an efficient means of transferring information, rather than a dwelling with what language discloses. (It was only six years after Heidegger’s lecture that Claude Shannon developed a “mathematical theory of communication” that defines information without any reference to meaning or disclosure.)¹⁵

In short, the typewriter is, in Pindar’s expression, a “signless cloud” (*Olympian Ode* 7.45): an occlusion that occludes itself, a shadowing of unconcealment that goes undetected precisely because it is an everyday phenomenon that we take for granted (GA 54: 121/82, 126/85). It is not that the typewriter, on its own, has clouded the world; this signless cloud, if properly read, points to an “event” of oblivion (GA 54: 121/82) that has affected the relations among being, human beings, and beings as a whole.

Heidegger notes that typewriters have a legitimate role as tools for transcribing handwritten text (GA 54: 119/81). This would presumably have been the function of his Urania-Piccola: Heidegger himself would not manipulate it, much less think with it, but his assistant could use it to help communicate Heidegger’s handwritten thoughts. Heidegger also relied on his brother Fritz to type his texts. Beginning in 1938, Fritz began using a typewriter at the bank where he worked (he did not own a machine himself) to transcribe Martin’s manuscripts in the evenings, producing four carbon copies of each typescript and filling in Greek words by hand.¹⁶ The existence of these copies helped to reduce the risk that the manuscripts would be destroyed in the looming war.¹⁷ Here, the typewriter finds an appropriate, subordinate place that illustrates Heidegger’s explanation of *Gelassenheit* in a popular lecture: “We let technical objects enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher” (GA 16: 527/DT 54).

THE CLEARING

How valid are Heidegger's observations on the *Schreibmaschine*? His students in 1942 seem to have snickered or scratched their heads at his seeming change of topic (GA 54: 126/85, 129/87) and wondered why this rant was intruding into his interpretation of early Greek thinking, particularly at a time when far more obvious threats than typewriting were facing the world. Friedrich Kittler archly writes, "Only his winter semester in Stalingrad revealed to the thinker – much to the surprise of his listeners – the relationship among Being, Man, and typewriter."¹⁸ With Don Ihde, many readers today find the passage "highly amusing and phenomenologically *arbitrary*."¹⁹

Ihde objects to the idea that the typewriter is an interloper between the writer and the act of writing. Instead, for a skilled typist, it enables fluid composition. "It is quite obvious to me that Heidegger never learned to type, else he would have eventually understood that the word 'flows' through the keyboard onto the scripted page."²⁰ Writing on a keyboard is no more alien to the essence of writing than playing a piano or saxophone – keyed instruments – is removed from the essence of music.²¹

If Heidegger had reflected on how we learn to use tools, says Ihde, he would have understood that they always go through an awkward, gangly phase before their possibilities blossom and they are integrated with our bodies.²² "The typewriter, for Heidegger, had not yet become transparent; neither had it withdrawn to become an embodied means of expression. For that matter, Heidegger does not recall that this same process had to acquire withdrawal and transparency with the pen."²³

Unlike the nostalgic Heidegger, Ihde believes in progress: writing goes "even better with an electronic rather than mechanical keyboard,"²⁴ so those who continue to use typewriters today have an "archaic" fixation on an "antiquated writing technology."²⁵

These comments clash with Ihde's more careful observation that all methods of writing have their advantages and tradeoffs: they "display different patterns of selectivity, of amplification and reduction, such that not everything can be expressed as well or at all, in each variant."²⁶ Today, new users are embracing typewriters because they feel that

digital writing amplifies connection and malleability but reduces concentration and self-reliance.²⁷ By the same token, when the noise and speed of a typewriter supplant the quiet competence of penmanship, something is gained but something is also lost.

If different techniques bring with them different kinds of disclosure, isn't it at least possible that some of these disclosures are richer and deeper than others? Heidegger is not complaining that typewriters get in the way of the fluidity of handwriting. He knows that typing can be swift and easy – in fact, this is part of his objection to it. Neither is he just being a Luddite (nor was Ludd simply wrong, for that matter). Instead, he is investigating the kinds of concealment and unconcealment that different tools entail.

Thde does score a point when he observes that Heidegger's dichotomy between machine writing and handwriting breaks down: "while [typewriting] is still writing by hand, it is now two-handed!"²⁸ Derrida makes the same point: "With mechanical or electrical writing machines...the fingers are still operating; more and more of them are at work."²⁹ For all his complex meditations on hands,³⁰ Heidegger seems to have missed the simple point that keyboards need hands, too. Proficient touch typing engages all the fingers, which dance fluidly over the keys. Only speech-to-text technology truly bypasses the hand. One wonders whether Heidegger would find that such technology is closer to or farther from the essence of language than handwriting is – but his negative reference to dictation machines (GA 54: 119/80–81) makes me doubt that he would be writing emails by talking to Siri.

In any case, one of Heidegger's points about handwriting certainly still stands: a handwritten text is a choreographic record of the writer's muscle movements (even if we reject graphology's bolder claims that the character of writers can be read in the way they form written characters). In contrast, the dance of fingers over keyboard evaporates without a trace – a typed text barely discloses the writer's body.³¹

Derrida also challenges Heidegger's dichotomy between the reproducibility of the technological and the singularity of the significant – a dichotomy encapsulated in an oddly technical metaphor when Heidegger says that "enframing [*Ge-stell*] is, as it were, the photographic negative of

the appropriating event [*Ereignis*]” (GA 15: 366/FS 60). Focusing on writing, Derrida sees a connection between mechanical pattern and manual event: “when we write ‘by hand’ we are not in the time before technology; there is already instrumentality, regular reproduction, mechanical iterability.”⁵² Handwriting, too, needs rules and repetition – even when one is writing something new and unique. Can we, then, “join the thinking of the event to the thinking of the machine?”⁵³ An event as such is traumatic, in that “its singularity interrupts an order and rips apart. . . the normal fabric of temporality or history.”⁵⁴ But this rip cannot happen without a textile, a system, a “machine,” which in turn makes it possible to record and interpret the breach, to write it. Derrida asks, then, “How does this ‘textual event’ inscribe itself? What is the operation of its inscription? What is the writing machine, the typewriter, that both produces it and archives it?”⁵⁵ Handwriting presupposes a system of semantic differences. So does the typewriter, which lets the alphabet lie ready-to-hand as equipment awaiting manipulation. But in both cases, the actual event of writing can produce an unprecedented illumination that generates new patterns of meaning.

Derrida and Ihde develop some valid critiques of Heidegger’s sometimes simplistic and overly dualistic concepts. But it seems to me that they ignore the main issue at hand: the way we write is a delicate matter that calls for care, for a great deal is at stake. When we use language – or let it use us – we are disclosing and closing off what there is, in the light of what being means to us. Every word helps to tease open a clearing that has certain contours and is enveloped by its own kind of darkness. As fun as it may be to laugh at the contrast between ponderous Heideggerian concepts and banalities such as a piece of office equipment, it is mostly in small, familiar things that our understanding of being is embedded and developed. “Even the ‘most abstract’ working out of problems. . . deals with writing implements. As ‘uninteresting’ and ‘obvious’ as such elements of scientific research may be, they are by no means ontologically indifferent” (GA 2: 474/SZ 358). The capabilities and limitations of our writing tools are intimately involved with our understanding of being and truth.

Quine, for example, had his 1927 Remington portable modified to handle symbolic logic. Among the characters that he sacrificed was the question mark. “Well, you see, I deal in certainties,” he explained.⁵⁶



Fig. 12. W. V. Quine's keyboard

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Heidegger protested the unjust absence of a secondarily historical piece of equipment from the historical world of the University of Freiburg in 1932. Today, the machine he acquired to replace that equipment is present, but the world from which it came has vanished (cf. GA 2: 503/SZ 380). Dasein and its world “ripe and ripe,” then “rot and rot” (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7) – but the typewriter abides.

Typewriters now have the phenomenological advantage of no longer being everyday things. They are holdovers from an earlier world, stranded survivors. The new context makes them more conspicuous; they are self-disguising clouds no more, but portals to unfamiliar clearings. The familiar things that instantiate *lēthē* in the twenty-first century are not typewriters, but the information-processing devices – often lurking in an undetected “cloud” – that relieve us of the burden of remembering, handle or mishandle language, and can even

generate new, quasi-human text based on a purely statistical analysis of digital data. This is surely a new and troubling epoch in the history of language, being, and truth.³⁷

The particular typewriter that Heidegger signed, Urania-Piccola #110482, is dense with significations. As a serially produced device meant to “process” language, it exemplifies the technological understanding of being. At the same time, it vividly evokes a vanished *Strangfeld* in all its particularity, and points to the once-living, bodily presence of Martin Heidegger. It is enmeshed in connections to politics, police, and persecuted persons. One might even experience it as a Thing that gathers the fourfold: earth (metal and rubber), sky (the heavens in the logo), divinities (Urania, muse of astronomy), and mortals (everyone who made the typewriter, sold it, owned it, touched it, and wrote with it). Can any entity do more to shelter the meaning of being?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND SOURCES

My sincere gratitude goes to Adam Knowles for sharing the documentation of the theft of Werner Brock's typewriter. I also thank Alfred Denker for helping me read Heidegger's handwriting, and Daniel Fidel Ferrer for locating images of typewritten letters by Heidegger.

Fig. 1: Replica of Peter Mitterhofer's 1864 Vienna model in Schreibmaschinenmuseum Peter Mitterhofer, Partschins, Italy. Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b1/Peter_Mitterhofer_Schreibmaschine_1864_Replikat_Cut_out.jpg. Photograph by ManfredK, modified by MagentaGreen. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>.

Figs. 8-11: University of Freiburg archives, file B 0001/3349. Reproduced by permission of Universitätsarchiv Freiburg.

Fig. 12: Courtesy of Douglas B. Quine, Ph.D., W. V. Quine Literary Estate.

NOTES

- 1 Michael H. Adler, *The Writing Machine* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 130–35.
- 2 <https://www.ebay.com/itm/392754447089>, accessed April 8, 2020. The listing is no longer available. I have not corrected the minor linguistic errors in the text.
- 3 All translations from *Sein und Zeit* are mine.
- 4 Leonhard Dingwerth, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Schreibmaschinen-Fabriken*, vol. 1, *Große und mittlere Hersteller* (Delbrück: Verlag Kunstgrafik Dingwerth, 2008), 117–23.
- 5 Examples can be seen on The Typewriter Database (<https://typewriterdatabase.com/Urania.Piccola.01.bmys>) and through a general online image search.
- 6 The Strangfeld company affixed its name to some portable typewriters manufactured by the small company Graf & Oertel (<https://typewriterdatabase.com/1932-strangfeld-strangfeld.11993.typewriter>, accessed April 27, 2022).
- 7 Serial numbers for the model begin at 105000 for 1932 and 115000 for 1933: Herbert F. W. Schramm, *Liste der Herstellungsdaten deutscher und ausländischer Schreibmaschinen, mit wichtigen technischen Daten*, 11th ed. (Hamburg: Hans Burghagen Verlag, 1962), 306. These numbers may be approximations, but if they are close to fact, the typewriter in question (#110482) was manufactured in mid-1932.
- 8 Universitätsarchiv Freiburg, file B 0001/3349.
- 9 Hugo Ott, *Heidegger: A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 187.
- 10 Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being* (London: Vision Press, 1949). Brock writes that Heidegger “expressed the desire some time ago that I should write an Introduction to his essays” (15).
- 11 A double-spaced, typewritten letter dated November 14, 1936 from Heidegger to Magda Stomps – a former student of his, theologian, and member of the National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands – has a typeface that matches that of the Urania-Piccola. A

letter to Stomps dated January 25, 1952 appears to have the same typeface, but in this case the line spacing, intermediate between single and double spacing, would be impossible for the Urania-Piccola to produce. One and the same typeface could be used on several different makes and models of typewriter, and neither letter reveals idiosyncrasies in the type that might connect them to this particular Urania-Piccola. The letters do include typographical errors that an expert typist would not have committed. Stomps was friendly with both Martin and Elfride Heidegger; it is plausible that Elfride typed these letters composed by Martin. His correspondence with Stomps is described and pictured by Antiquariat INLIBRIS Gilhofer Nfg. at <https://inlibris.com/item/bn52885/> (accessed April 26, 2022).

- 12 Heidegger investigates modern machines at length at GA 76: 286–378 – always in terms of how they instantiate the modern interpretation of beings as such and as a whole. He does not understand “technology by way of the machine, but the *machine* on the basis of the essence of technology” as a kind of revealing (GA 76: 352).
- 13 On Heidegger’s developing critique of Nazism, which is not simply a rejection, see Richard Polt, *Time and Trauma: Thinking Through Heidegger in the Thirties* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), Chapter 2.
- 14 Those who are curious about the phenomenon of composing poetry on a typewriter in the twenty-first century can find a first-hand account in Brian Sonia-Wallace’s *The Poetry of Strangers: What I Learned Traveling America With a Typewriter* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2020). Heidegger nowhere mentions that one of his favorite thinkers, Nietzsche, tried composing on a typewriter (a Malling-Hansen Writing Ball) in February and March of 1882, and even compared himself to the machine: Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 201–8. For a thorough technical analysis of the typescripts see

- Dieter Eberwein, *Nietzsches Schreibkugel: Ein Blick auf Nietzsches Schreibmaschinenzeit durch die Restauration der Schreibkugel* (Typoskript-Verlag, 2005).
- 15 Claude Shannon, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,”
The Bell System Technical Journal 27 (1948): 379–423, 623–56.
- 16 These are the recollections of Fritz Heidegger’s son Heinrich, as
 quoted in Hans Dieter Zimmermann, *Martin und Fritz Heidegger:
 Philosophie und Fastnacht* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005), 143.
- 17 It is thanks to a typewriter that we have the only known copy
 of the first draft of the 1929 lecture “What is Metaphysics?” See
 Martin Heidegger, “Was ist Metaphysik? Urfassung / What is
 Metaphysics? Original Version,” ed. Dieter Thomä, trans. Ian Al-
 exander Moore and Gregory Fried, *Philosophy Today* 62:3 (Sum-
 mer 2018): 733–51.
- 18 Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 198.
- 19 Don Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Per-
 spectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 128. Lu-
 ciano Mascaro argues that all of Heidegger’s statements about
 writing and typewriters can be challenged on historical or phe-
 nomenological grounds – but that there is always a Heideggerian
 response, namely, that his statements are not empirical claims
 about devices, but ontological claims about the understanding
 of being that forms the larger context for those devices. This, in
 turn, limits the utility of Heidegger’s philosophy of technology
 as a guide to concrete technological phenomena. See Mascaro,
 “La máquina de escribir de Heidegger: los objetos técnicos como
 ejemplos en su filosofía,” *Pensando* 11:24 (2020): 170–82.
- 20 Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies*, 122.
- 21 Ibid., 123. A typical typewriter, such as an Urania-Piccola, uses a
 set of little “hammers” (typebars) to mark the page; why, then,
 asks Mascaro, is the typewriter any less authentic than the ham-
 mer in Heidegger’s paradigmatic workshop? “La máquina de es-
 cribir de Heidegger,” 178.

- 22 Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies*, 130. "The subject who learns to type literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily space": Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 146.
- 23 Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies*, 124.
- 24 Ibid., 122.
- 25 Ibid., 126.
- 26 Ibid., 134.
- 27 Richard Polt, *The Typewriter Revolution: A Typist's Companion for the 21st Century* (Woodstock, VT: The Countryman Press, 2015).
- 28 Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies*, 133.
- 29 Jacques Derrida, "The Word Processor," in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 21.
- 30 Jacques Derrida, "Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht II*)" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. II, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); see 46–48 on Heidegger on typewriters.
- 31 The irregularity of impressions produced by a typical manual typewriter is a faint sign of the typist's musculature, a sign that is now taken by some as an indicator of authenticity, along with smudged ink and rough paper: Polt, *The Typewriter Revolution*, 266–67. Derrida observes that the notion that handwriting can and should express individual personality, as in a signature, is a fetish of modernity: "The Word Processor," 31.
- 32 Derrida, "The Word Processor," 20.
- 33 Jacques Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2)," in *Without Alibi*, tr. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 72.
- 34 Ibid., 136. On *Ereignis* as traumatic event, see Polt, *Time and Trauma*, 222.
- 35 Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," 114. On Derrida's own typewriting, see Jacques Derrida and Daniel Ferrer, "Entre le corps écrivain et l'écriture...: Entretien avec Daniel Ferrer," *Genesis* 17

- (2001): 59–72 and Katie Chenoweth, “*Faute de frappe*: Derrida’s Typos,” *Research in Phenomenology* 51 (2021): 61–77.
- 36 Willard Van Orman Quine profile in *Beacon Hill Paper*, May 15, 1996, p. 11, quoted at <http://www.wvquine.org/wvq-newspaper.html>. See Mel Andrews, “Quine’s Remington Portable no. 2,” *ETCetera: Journal of the Early Typewriter Collectors’ Association* 131 (Winter 2020/2021), 19–20.
- 37 For one take on this new epoch, see Richard Polt, “A Heideggerian Critique of Cyberbeing,” in *Horizons of Authenticity in Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology: Essays in Honor of Charles Guignon*, ed. Hans Pedersen and Megan Altman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015).