

Heidegger Studies
Heidegger Studien
Etudes Heideggeriennes

**Being-historical Thinking and Mindfulness:
Plato, Leibniz, Hegel,
and the Question of Truth**



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**Thinking without Bannisters:
Heidegger, the Jews and Modernity in the Context of the
Black Notebooks (1931–1948)**

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„Wir kennen nicht Ziele und sind nur ein Gang“
Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung*

„Wenn ich arbeite, bin ich an Wirkung nicht interessiert.
Wesentlich ist für mich: Ich muß verstehen, ich will verstehen“
Hannah Arendt in *Gespräch mit Günter Gaus*

I. Philosophy and ideology: boundaries and interferences

The boundary between philosophy and ideology is difficult to define. This difficulty arises respectively from the epistemological constitution of each discipline, from the goals they pursue and from the narrative they follow. When we refer to philosophy in general, the risk is to put into the same field subjects that are very different from each other, that have different features and that have a different focus. Reasonably, we can assume that the subjects of discussion typical of philosophy of religion are different from topics discussed in political philosophy, or that the research topics of philosophy of science are situated in a field a bit far from philosophy of arts, or from philosophy of history, or that the main focus of ontology is not so close to philosophy of economics. The peculiarity of each field does not mean incommunicability among them. Rather, it only means that every specialization has its own aims, challenges and arguments. The diversity of philosophical disciplines seems to obscure the unity of philosophy itself. Moreover, if we consider the range of issues such as post-modernity, post-humanism, post-secularism, liquid modernity and so on, this difficulty seems to be insurmountable due to different needs faced by our time. However, those needs show a huge increase in knowledge and information corresponding to a high level of specialization, but also a very poor consideration of *thinking itself*.

Among different fields that constitute philosophy (in our modern consideration), the field of political philosophy usually invites criticisms that can easily drift into ideology. Political philosophy is located in a highly intriguing relationship to politics: “On the one hand, its focus on the normative, on forms of the good life, on what is morally proper, and on the right kind of decisions, has placed it at the

centre of what most contemporary academics regard as political theory: a guide, a corrective, and a justification for enlightened and civilized forms of organized social life and political institutions. On the other hand, the disciplinary constraints that apply to producing good philosophy have all too often distanced its practitioners from the actual stuff of politics and have contributed to a general sense of the estrangement of philosophy from political life."¹ In other words, political philosophers are usually philosophers *prior* to their examination of the political, since political arguments usually have an ethical, as well as an analytical dimension. The research of *truth* seems to be one of the main themes of philosophical discussions, and of political ones, and usually arguments follow the rhetoric of certainty (and lack of certainty) in addressing researched goals. However, truth is a very problematic issue both in philosophy in general and in political philosophy in particular. Sometimes we are faced with positions that overlap truth and *meaning*; sometimes we deal with others that are simply a product of confirmation bias, and yet, in other contexts, we see how deductions work in creating confirmation bias. As well, in other context, we deal with fallacies that seem to say *something* true, but that are not true, and so on. The main problem is in defining the boundary between what is true (in itself) and what is the meaning (of something), since truth and meaning are not the same. Another point is to define what we call *certainty*, since it is often a necessary substitute for the unattainability of truth.

It is difficult to provide an extended and comprehensive definition of what ideology is: these difficulties mainly arise from the subject itself, the various ways in which ideology might be related to law, the implications that ideology has with philosophy, sociology, economics, politics. Also a common way to refer to ideology as a source of manipulation of public opinion plays its role in this framework. The majority of scholars are familiar with the philological origins of this term, coined by the French thinker Claude Destutt de Tracy² in his study of the Enlightenment. For De Tracy, ideology is the science of *ideas* and their origins, and it understands ideas in terms of the result of forces in the material environment that shape what people think. However, nowadays ideology doesn't mean this anymore. Rather, the ideas themselves, and in particular those ideas whose goals are not epistemic but political, and that are able to confirm a certain political point of view in relation with the other fields that characterised a society (social, economic, legal, cultural, etc.).

If we would summarise the main differences between ideology and philosophy, we could mention basically four points. Firstly, ideology uses "very rationale public forms of language, intended to be disseminated and consumed by large groups of people, and to create shared understandings that can direct political prac-

¹ Michael Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy", in *Handbook of Political Theory*, ed. G. F. Gaus and C. Kukathas (London: Sage, 2004), p. 4.

² Claude Destutt de Tracy, *Éléments d'idéologie*, 5 volumes (Paris: Vrin, 2014).

tices"³. It means that ideology needs a broad circulation and it cannot be expressed in terms that are conceptually and argumentatively too complex. Usually the "yes or no" logic resolves the need of broad circulation. On the other side, we found that philosophy communicates with a kind of language that can define the opposite of the ideological one; the restricted language, accessible only to specialists, usually is a strong limit for the impact on public community. Erroneously, the difficulty internal to philosophical language is mostly considered as an esoteric feature: the technical jargon typical of philosophical thought is not very far from the jargon used in other disciplines, such as chemistry, physics, or law, disciplines that never seem to be accompanied by the same adjective – thus not regarded as 'esoteric'.

Second, "ideologies are not merely directed at groups, they always are group products"⁴ of people who share some common roots (also philosophical, not necessarily only political). They provide to the masses an explanation of facts that usually are grounded on personal bias. On the other side, we find that philosophy is always the work of a thinker – even if we consider the case of group of thinkers, such as the Frankfurt School, every thinker has his own philosophical peculiarity that barely provides to the masses a conceptual framework for thinking. Third, "ideologies employ a threefold use of emotion. They wrap rational discourse in varying layers of emotive idiom; they assign emotional import to their key values; and they openly recognize the centrality of emotion in socio-political interaction."⁵ The emphasis put on emotions and feelings has a significant rhetorical effect and impact on public opinion. The use of emotion is a very powerful tool in the widespread communication and very easily answers the "yes or no" logic through inferences and supposed implications. On the other side, we found that philosophy is characterised by a rational use of language and strong logical procedures that, more often than not, have often led people to accuse philosophers of being detached from the human heart. Inferences and conjectures are not considered as arguments, but they need to be verified and put into discussion.

Fourth, ideology tends to be a "mobilization of significant groups who compete in order to impact on acts of collective decision-making. It is therefore no surprise that most, if not all, ideologies delight in surrounding their arguments with the opaque and the non-transparent aura of terms such as 'natural' or 'self-evident' precisely because this captures the high ground that is immune from challenge. These are acts of conceptual "decontesting" devised to end the competition over which political meaning is dominant or legitimate, and 'legitimate' does not always carry with it the connotation of morally or rationally justifiable."⁶ Sometimes we are faced with ideological readings that practice manipulation and distortion,

³ Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy", p. 11.

⁴ Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy", p. 11.

⁵ Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy", p. 11–12.

⁶ Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy", p. 12.

pressing their prejudices through some form of bias. Paul Ricoeur⁷ has defined these procedures as a “surplus of meaning” in terms of covering the gap between what the author intended to say and what readers understand the author to say: the “excess of signification”. This “excess of signification” works through the tendentious rewriting of narratives and it is implemented by the typical rhetorical style: rhetorical questions, circular ideas, *climax* in description. Ideology’s internal structure is achieved through different kinds of argumentative persuasiveness – reason, morality, and emotion. In order to be widespread, it requires further features: it must be influential – under this respect the fallacy of “halo effect” is behind the corner; it must be communicable in a very easy way (yes or no answer), and it can contain elements that cannot be historically verified. On the contrary, philosophy insists on transparency since its aim is to explain, clarify, and justify reality and human phenomena. Under this respect, the persuasion provoked by a philosophical argument is always a rational persuasion. A good philosophical argument is rational, logical, coherent, precise, reflexive and self-critical. Taking a point out of context is not considered a philosophical procedure in addressing arguments, and the tendency in problematizing answers is a fundamental tool of philosophical investigation.

These premises are not an attempt to clarify logical requirements, but are fundamental tools at work when we want to demonstrate something through a strong philosophical argument. If we consider the boundary between philosophy itself and ideology, then it is difficult not to glimpse how some authors, some works, some thoughts have been considered from a perspective that is far from the original context and original challenges. Plato, Hobbes, Marx, Heidegger – just to name a few – have been privilege subjects of ideological readings. Ideology is a pervasive, patterned forms of thinking that can be applied to whatever philosopher, but the effects that this can produce are very different. Using Arendt’s words, we could say that whereas ancient sophists are satisfied with a passing victory of the argument at the expense of truth, the modern ideologists want a more lasting victory at the expense of reality.⁸

II. Heidegger’s *thinking* before the court of ideology

Perhaps it is not totally incorrect to claim that ideological readings have been found in Martin Heidegger, as one of the most suitable subjects to provide readers with their own insights: doubtful, but at the same time also remarkable to show how philosophy works in comparison with ideological interpretations. Before going through the long story that crosses over Heidegger’s reception in Western

⁷ See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1976), p. 9.

society, perhaps it is useful stating clearly that this essay is not an apology of Heidegger, not a defense against his own words, not a polemic towards some scholars. This work is not searching for the straw man in the “Heidegger affair” and, moreover, is not grounded on the assumption that some personal opinions of Heidegger cannot be criticized, as well as his thought. Rather, it is a simple attempt to investigate Heidegger’s thought *philosophically*, that is, showing in which sense some readings work (and worked) following the main features of ideology mentioned in the previous paragraph. One could be allowed to think that this position is very close to the fallacy typical of an argument from authority, since the focus on systematic philosophical approaches and the consequent critiques towards some interpretations could evoke the doubt that only the author of this paper knows how to pursue a systematic philosophical interrogation (whose authority could be evaluated as self-attributed). However, the self-awareness of this fallacy and the need to move forward from it is a valid credential to step out of this limit providing a careful reading of some concepts that seem to be catalyzed towards the *Black Notebooks*. In other words, critically thinking assumes that the *argumentum ad verecundiam* doesn’t always imply a consistent philosophical approach, neither a systematic one and for these reasons, all bannisters can be considered worthless.

Since Heidegger was alive, there have been many different ways of approaching his thought. We could distinguish between readings that were aimed to discredit Heidegger as a man – or more in general as a human being – and readings aimed to discredit his thought. For the first type of accusations, Heidegger tried to defend himself, as a human being, against many accusations, but soon after 1946 he decided to not provide any argument in any terms of a defense. As Medard Boss notes:

... all these inquiries Heidegger very clearly seemed to be the most slandered man I had ever encountered. He had become entangled in a network of lies by his colleagues. Most of the people, who were unable to do serious harm to the substance of Heidegger’s thinking, tried to get at Heidegger the man with personal attacks. The only remaining puzzle was why Heidegger did not defend himself against these slanders publicly. The astonishing fact of his defencelessness gave me the incentive to stand up for him to the best of my ability.⁹

For the second type of accusations, Heidegger was aware of the powerful implications that his thought could have had for philosophy and more in general for human beings’ life. Contrary to those who have fed the naïve idea that Heidegger aimed to create a kind of “sect of being”, Heidegger had only one concern: that all human beings could have understood his meditation, not for consensus, but only because of the questions it arises. The insistence with whom Heidegger tried to

⁹ Medard Boss, *Preface*, in Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars. Protocols-Conversations-Letters*, trans. by R. Askay & F. Mayr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. xvi.

clarify his own thinking to himself is not only inscribed into the necessity of a thinking able to answer to the fundamental question (what is the being?), but it is also an attempt to provide people with critical tools with whom understand their own time. Under this respect, we may assume that Heidegger's questions are still valid for our time and can be important indications to face the challenges of our era. Nevertheless, ideological readings of Heidegger's thinking were still ongoing soon after *Being and Time*¹⁰. Defined by one of the fundamental books of existentialism¹¹ – a definition that Heidegger has always avoided for his meditation¹² – the general reception of this book was characterised by astonishment, both for its distance from Husserl's phenomenology and for a new focus on human being: not anthropological, not scientific, not ethical but in terms of *phenomenological relation*.

It has been his personal interpretation and vision of National socialism that captured the critique from the party. Soon after his Rectorship' speech (May 7th, 1933), the Minister of Public Education of Baden blamed Heidegger for having a personal conception of National Socialism that needed to be rooted into the party's ideology. From the very end of 1933 the name of Heidegger was circulating among the leadership of the party as author of a book (*Being and Time*) considered not typical of German spirit and of Nazi propaganda. Ernst Krieck, Rector of Frankfurt University during 1933–1934 and at the same time powerful Nazi hierarch, threw a violent critique toward *Sein und Zeit* and more in general against Hei-

¹⁰ «The failure – the other writings and *Being and Time* have not in the least succeeded even only to nudge in the direction of questioning, let alone produce an understanding of the question, an understanding which would lead to a retrieved questioning. Instead, only inane idle talk. Yet how one with such a huge failure nevertheless for a while can be on everyone's lips and on the nib of everyone's pen and can thereby make a "name" for himself. How dreadful that is – not for the one concerned, who has and retains the task – indeed grasps still more his new task – but rather for those who totter about in such idle talk and next year must already be on the lookout for something new to chatter about. Yet – there must be persons ("scriptores" ["writers"]) who make a vocation out of this and a business as well», Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)* Hrsg. Peter Trawny, GA 94 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2014); *Ponderings II–VI (Black Notebooks 1931–1938)*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2016), p. 35.

¹¹ «The ridiculousness of a "philosophy of existence," not a lot better than "philosophy of life"», GA 94, p. 15.

¹² «Zur Feststellung: mit der »Existenzphilosophie« habe ich nichts zu tun und schon gar nicht mit derjenigen von Heysse. Ob dessen aus Mißverständnissen von »Sein und Zeit« zum siebenten Mal aufgekochte und mit »nationalsozialistischem Gedankengut« versalzene Wassersuppe etwas mit mir zu tun hat, darüber nachzudenken überlasse ich diesem »Denker«, Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII–XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)* Hrsg. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2014), GA 95, pp. 170–171. Where not specified, every translation from German into English and from Italian into English here are my own.

degger's meditation stating that: "The ideological spirit of Heidegger's doctrine is defined by concepts such as Care and Anguish that are aimed to Nothingness itself. The sense of this philosophy is an explicit atheism and a metaphysical nihilism, similar to the nihilism supported by Jewish writers, and as such, it is an impulse toward depravation and dissolution of the German people"¹³. It is not in my interest to comment on Krieck's accusation, but his ideological reading. The focus of his little article is to remark about the distances between the German historical origins, myths and German Spirit with Heidegger's philosophy, stressing how this last one is not German at all. Quite evident for the Nazi hierarchy was the need to feed ideological political propaganda typical of Nazism. Krieck was one of the most influential and powerful members of the Nazi party and together with Erich Jaensch had repeatedly accused Heidegger of sharing Jewish ideology since he had worked with Jews since those Marburg years¹⁴.

Heidegger was unpopular both among Nazis – as the huge number of documents in the period between 1933–1942 show – and Catholics as well during his time in Freiburg. It is the French writer Frédéric de Towarnicki in his little essay about his friendship with Heidegger, to recall the insistence with whom, soon after the war, the Catholics at Freiburg expected an "exemplary punishment" for the ex-University Rector¹⁵. This position was also endorsed by Hugo Ott¹⁶. The "dreaming boy" – as Jaspers defined Heidegger's conviction in National Socialism – was accused, insulted and processed for his "mistake" – what in the *Black Notebooks* he called *Irrtum* – and, at the very end, "de-Nazified" with the process of 1946. In *Remarks I (Anmerkungen I)* we read:

The real mistake in the 1933 Rectorate was not so much the fact that I, as other smarter people than me, haven't recognised "Hitler" reluctantly in his "essence" and that, lately, together with them, I put myself aside, in the sphere of the absence of will (...), rather that I have believed *that* moment as *the* time in which becoming historical-initially, not through Hitler, but through the people's awakening to their western destiny¹⁷.

¹³ Ernst Krieck, «Germanischer Mythos und Heidegger'sche Philosophie», *Volk im Werden*, II (1934), p. 247.

¹⁴ Quoted in Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A political life*, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 219–223.

¹⁵ F. de Towarnicki, *À la rencontre de Heidegger: Souvenirs d'un messager de la Forêt-Noire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

¹⁶ Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A political life*, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

¹⁷ «Der eigentliche Irrtum des »Rektorats 1933« war nicht so sehr, daß ich, wie andere Klügere, nicht »Hitler« in seinem »Wesen« erkannte und mit jenen in der Folgezeit grolend daneben stand, im Bereich der Willenlosigkeit (...) sondern daß ich meinte, jetzt sei die Zeit, nicht mit Hitler, aber mit einer Erweckung des Volkes in seinem abendländischen Geschick anfänglich – geschichtlich zu werden», Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V (1942–1948)*, Hrsg. Peter Trawny, GA 97 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2015), p. 98.

And a bit further:

The mistake was not “political”, in the mere sense that one failed into mistake regarding the “party”; from a political point of view, in a world-history meaning, the decision was not a mistake; because it was not expected to be faithful to the National Socialism as Institution, for the eternity; this last one (the National Socialism) was thought as the end of metaphysics, as a passage that could be overcome only through the beginning¹⁸.

In the letter to the Rector of Freiburg University dated November 4th 1945, he writes:

After my resignation from the rectorship¹⁹ it became clear that by continuing to teach, my opposition to the principles of the National Socialist world-view would only grow (...). It sufficed for me to express my fundamental philosophical positions against the dogmatism and primitivism of Rosenberg’s biologism (...). Since National Socialist ideology became increasingly inflexible and increasingly less disposed to a purely philosophical interpretation, the fact that I was active as a philosopher was itself a sufficient expression of opposition (...). I also demonstrated publicly my attitude toward the Party by not participating in its gatherings, by not wearing its regalia, and, as of 1934, by refusing to begin my courses and lectures with the so-called German greeting [Heil Hitler!]²⁰.

In the little essay entitled “My Removal, (GA 16) from 1946, Heidegger writes (referring to someone unknown):

You are wondering with someone else why my “denazification” is not yet settled. It is very easy to explain. My removal, at the bottom, has nothing to do with Nazism. Something very uncomfortable is smelled into my thought, perhaps disturbing too, and one wants to distance himself from it (...). Moreover, it is understandable, in similar circumstances, that those once were “pupils” and “friends” now, thinking about their families, their position, their opportunity to prove their worth, justify themselves claiming “Heidegger is a hot potato”²¹.

¹⁸ «Der Irrtum war nicht ein bloß »politischer« in dem Sinne, daß man sich in der »Partei« versah; politisch im weltgeschichtlichen Sinne war die Entscheidung kein Irrtum; denn es sollte im Vorhinein nicht beim National-sozialismus als solchem bleiben, als einer Einrichtung für die Ewigkeit; er war gedacht als Ende der Metaphysik, als Übergang, der selbst nur aus dem Anfang zu überwinden sein wird», GA 97, p. 148.

¹⁹ Heidegger’s rectorate lasted only 9 months.

²⁰ M. Heidegger, *Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University*, in *Political texts*, in R. Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader* (Cambridge – MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 61–66.

²¹ «Du wunderst Dich mit manchen anderen darüber, daß meine »Entnazifizierung« immer noch nicht erledigt ist. Das läßt sich leicht erklären. Meine Beseitigung hat im Grunde mit Nazismus gar nichts zu tun. Man spürt in meinem Denken etwas Unbequemes, vielleicht sogar Unheimliches, was man weg haben möchte (...) Auch läßt sich bei solchen Umständen verstehen, daß diejenigen, die früher einmal »Anhänger« und »Freunde« oder ähnliches waren, jetzt mit Rücksicht auf ihre Familie, auf ihre Stellung, auf die Chancen ihres eigenen Geltens, sich vor sich selbst damit herausreden, »daß Heidegger ein heißes Eisen sei«, Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges 1910–1976*,

It is in the context of *Black Notebooks*, in *Ponderings XI (Überlegungen XI)* that we can read:

Thinking purely “metaphysical” (that is, according to the history of being), in the years 1930–1934 I’ve considered the National Socialism as the chance to another passage toward another beginning and in this meaning I’ve interpreted it. Thus, I’ve misunderstood and underestimated this “movement” in its true forces and in its inner necessities, as well as in its measure and type²².

We find in the last volume of *Black Notebooks*, *Anmerkungen (1942–1948)* a precious indication pencilled by Heidegger – in the context of his relationship with Husserl and in consideration of the accusation of having been forbidden access to the Philosophy Department to his old Jewish teacher – in relation with the tendency of accusations and the dismissive attitude to defend himself: in *Anmerkungen V* we can read: “I don’t claim this to defend myself, rather only as mere statement (...), I wanted to do this clarification not for the public, not for defending myself, but only as an observation.”²³

The ideological readings of Heidegger’s thinking can be observed from their very beginning and through their waves of revival²⁴: during the Nazism, Heidegger was considered an author that has nothing to do with the ideology of National Socialism, since his meditation “cannot be used adequately” to promote the values of Nazism; soon after the World War II he was mentioned among the rank of existentialism and as someone very close to Theology, until arriving at considering the question of being as the question of God. However, it was soon after his death that his *damnatio memoriae* became known as a new wave, through the contribution of Farias’ book *Heidegger and Nazism* (1987) and with some other minor works. For the first time in the history of Heidegger’s reception there was this remarkable reading: Heidegger’s philosophy is inherently fascist. With Farias’ book the debate around the political implications of Heidegger’s thinking in philosophy acquire different connotations, since Farias’ ability to manipulate Heidegger’s quotations pro-

Hrsg. Hermann Heidegger, GA 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2000), p. 421.

²² «Rein »metaphysisch« (d.h. seynsgeschichtlich) denkend habe ich in den Jahren 1930–1934 den Nationalsozialismus für die Möglichkeit eines Übergangs in einen anderen Anfang gehalten und ihm diese Deutung gegeben. Damit wurde diese »Bewegung« in ihren eigentlichen Kräften und inneren Notwendigkeiten sowohl als auch in der ihr eigenen Größengebung und Größenart verkannt und unterschätzt», GA 95, p. 408.

²³ «Ich nenne dies nicht zur Verteidigung, nur als Feststellung (...) sei dies noch einmal vermerkt, nicht für die Öffentlichkeit, nicht zur Verteidigung, sondern als Feststellung», GA 97, pp. 462–463.

²⁴ On this specific topic, I refer the reader to the recent contribution of Jean Grondin, entitled *Warum ich Heidegger in schwieriger Zeit treu bleibe*, in W. Homolka, A. Heidegger, *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus. Positionen in Widerstreit*, Herder Verlag, Freiburg 2016, pp. 232–241.

moted a wave of anti-Heideggerianism, from which a new generation of thinkers contributed to an ideological reading of Heidegger's works. As Farias himself has admitted in a public interview²⁵, his use of Heidegger's texts was not scientific and, with a kind of irony, he has admitted the limits of his work even if it generated a huge level of misinterpretations and misunderstanding – adding insults to injury.

Gadamer, perhaps, has been the first one to discover the risks of the tendency to read Heidegger in an ideological way, and the conference he organised in Heidelberg from February 5th to 6th 1988 with Derrida and Labarthe was aimed at dissolving the fog around these aspects and positions²⁶. Moreover, Gadamer's initial position²⁷ on the "Heidegger case" was that the conference should help us in understanding how things have been developed during these last 30 years. Recently, some unpublished letters, exchanged with von Herrmann, have proved how Gadamer was aware of the risk of interpretations and manipulations made by the media. In a letter dated November 30th 1987, Gadamer writes:

Dear Herr von Herrmann,

You have certainly no idea how much this Farias' affair irritates me. Naturally, from a higher point of view, we could think that this shallow and mediocre book does not contain anything really new for the German readers and certainly nothing that can be used against Heidegger. However, the mass media's reality forces us to coming out from that discretion in which we conformed ourselves till now, at least as far as it concerns me. The huge effect that Farias's book is provoking in France shows how superficially things are handled in the world nowadays (...). At this point I become sceptic. The modern mass-media are insatiable and they also know how to create any form of need even if it would not have been required; the case would be even better when the foreign countries are already furious (on this issue). So after having studied the book, I have not seen any other pathway than to devote myself to this issue in the most careful way I can. However, this challenge is as delicate as difficult. Of course, there are ongoing foolishnesses in this situation, as when one chooses to interpret *Sein und Zeit*'s style as pre-Nazism. Unfortunately, the world history suggested us this kind of deductions. The 20's era, which was at the same time so desperate and full of life, is part of the development of National Socialism movement. The enthusiastic expectations of a part of the youth and of a part of the intellectual class were not so different from what Heidegger and his friends in Freiburg hoped in the framework of University life (...). My only hope is that the "Heidegger affair" will be exaggerated so much that it will be not the chance not to take any longer into consideration the National Socialism from a vulgar point of view (...). Probably Heidegger's mistakes and weaknesses are not very different or worst

²⁵ I refer the reader to F. Volpi, A. Gnoli, *Le conseguenze di Heidegger*; in *La Repubblica*, 20 ottobre 2008.

²⁶ J. Derrida, H. G. Gadamer, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *La conférence de Heidelberg* (Paris: Ed. Lignes-Imec, 2014).

²⁷ See H. G. Gadamer, *Comme Platon a Siracuse*, in J. Derrida, H. G. Gadamer, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *La conférence de Heidelberg*; Id., *L'imbrogljo di Farias*, in *Espresso*, 24 aprile 1988.

from those that every human being would have been in risk to do in emergence conditions. It is always a bit pharisaic to talk about this, and I do not like it²⁸.

However, other authors followed the pathway inaugurated by Farias more or less all around the world. This tendency of accusation is mainly grounded on fallacies and cherry picking procedures, mistranslations, misinterpretations, and moreover the "yes or no" logic that characterizes ideology itself. It is in this scenario that the Black Notebooks have been presented as an important element to reawaken the *Heidegger affair*; 'spicing' it with new and tendentious elements.

III. The case "Black Notebooks": the anti-Semitism

Since Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*²⁹ have been published, another block has been provided to "square the circle". *Black Notebooks* "have been taken by

²⁸ «Verehrter Herr von Herrmann, Sie glauben gar nicht, wie mich die Angelegenheit Farias aufregt. Natürlich könnten wir uns in der überlegenen Haltung fühlen, daß dieses oberflächliche und miserable Buch für deutsche Leser im Grunde nichts Neues enthält, jedenfalls nichts, was man gegen Heidegger ausspielen kann. Aber die Wirklichkeit der Massenmedien nötigt einen, aus der bisher befolgten Reserve, soweit ich selbst in Frage komme, herauszutreten. Der Rieseneffekt, den das Buch von Farias in Frankreich macht, zeigt eben, daß man so oberflächlich in der Welt mit den Dingen umgeht. (...) Aber ich bin skeptisch geworden. Die modernen Massenmedien sind unersättlich und wissen auch Bedürfnisse zu erzeugen, wo keine bestehen, und vollends, wenn das Ausland bereits in Rage ist. So habe ich nach dem Studium des Buches keinen anderen Weg mehr gesehen, als die Sache gründlicher anzupacken. Das ist nun freilich ein ebenso heikles wie schwieriges Unternehmen. Natürlich ist das alles Unsinn, wenn man etwa die Stilgebung von 'Sein und Zeit' als Pränazismus interpretiert. Leider hat uns aber die Weltgeschichte genau solche Schlüsse suggeriert. Die ebenso verzweifelte wie doch auch lebensvolle Zeit der zwanziger Jahre ist zugleich ein Stück Lebenszeit in der Entstehung der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung gewesen. Die enthusiastischen Erwartungen eines Teils der Jugend und der jüngeren Intelligenzschichten war damals nicht so gänzlich verschieden von dem, was Heidegger und seine Freiburger Freunde auf dem Gebiete des Universitätslebens sich erhofften. (...) Meine einzige Hoffnung ist, daß sich der Fall Heidegger zum Anlaß ausweiten wird, das Phänomen des Nationalsozialismus nicht länger aus der Vulgärperspektive anzusehen (...). Die Fehler und Schwächen von Heidegger sind vermutlich keine anderen und keine größeren, als jeder andere Mensch in exponierten Lagen zu begehen in Gefahr ist. Davon reden zu müssen, ist immer etwas pharisäerhaft, ab und ich hasse das», letter published in F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger: La verità sui Quaderni Neri* (Brescia: Morecelliana, 2016), pp. 347–352.

²⁹ The so called *Schwarze Hefte* are 34 notebooks in which Heidegger collected his thoughts and opinions from 1931 to 1976. The Notebooks published by Vittorio Klostermann Verlag are those written from 1931 to 1941 (Gesamtausgabe 94, 95, 96 – called *Überlegungen*) and from 1942 to 1948 (Gesamtausgabe 97 – called *Anmerkungen*). The name "Black Notebooks" is derived from the book cover: a black wax leather. See Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, GA 94 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014); Id., *Überlegungen VII–XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, GA 95 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014); Id., *Überlegungen XII–XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, GA 96 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014); Id., *Anmerkungen I–V (1942–1948)*, GA 97 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015).

many to provide the ‘smoking gun’ that definitively demonstrates Heidegger’s Nazism and anti-Semitism, and on this basis, also establishes the unacceptability of Heidegger’s work within the canon of respectable thinking”³⁰. In other words, if the missing element of the *reductio ad Hitlerum* was the absence of antisemitism in his works, now that the *Black Notebooks* are published some scholars have clearly proposed interpretations focused on this point. Some academics have endorsed the naïve idea to take excerpts from *Schwarze Hefte* – the ones that “prove” Heidegger’s antisemitism – as an interpretative lens with which to read all the entire production of Heidegger³¹ and to assume that anti-Semitism could also contaminate the ontological thinking of Heidegger³². Maybe this is the most dangerous part of all this clamour: the fact that some passages on which some scholars have insisted could become hermeneutical tools with which to read, understand and interpret the history of being (*Seinsgeschichte*) – in other words, *philosophically*. Some scholars have also assumed expelling Heidegger’s thought from the history of philosophy because of his Nazism and Anti-Semitism³³.

The “yes or no” logic has been the more widespread paradigm with whom those get close to the *Black Notebooks* and it has been accompanied by all the elements that characterise ideology: very simple and widespread communication; language that can be easily understood by the masses and also repeated by a huge number of

³⁰ Jeff Malpas, “On the Philosophical Reading of Heidegger: Situating the Black Notebooks”, *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, ed. J. Malpas, I. Farin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), p. 4.

³¹ This is the position held by Richard Wolin, Emmanuel Faye, Sidonie Kellerer and Marion Heinz. See the forthcoming book *Martin Heidegger’s »Schwarze Hefte« – Eine philosophisch-politische Debatte*, ed. Marion Heinz und Sidonie Kellerer (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016 – September).

³² On this position I refer the reader to Peter Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, Frankfurt am M.: Klostermann Verlag, 2014), p. 14 and following; Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger & Sons* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2015), pp. 69–110. Günter Figal in the public Congress at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg held in January 2016, claimed that after the *Black Notebooks* we should re-read Heidegger with different interpretative lens and we need to distinguish what is anti-Semite in his meditation and what is not. It is my conviction that, perhaps, more than re-read Heidegger’s works through the lens of anti-Semitism, one could re-read Heidegger Black Notebooks’ interpretations without falling into some fallacies that contribute only to ideological readings and not philosophical ones. Oversimplifications, accusations, absolutes are not the task of philosophy, whose aim should be – among many others – to look into complications and ambiguities.

³³ See Richard Wolin, *National Socialism, World Jewry, and the History of Being: Heidegger’s Black Notebooks*, in *Jewish Review of Books*: <http://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/993/national-socialism-world-jewry-and-the-history-of-being-heideggers-black-notebooks/>; Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Id., “Essere e svastika. Heidegger, l’antisemitismo, l’affermazione dell’essenza tedesca, l’auto-annientamento del nemico”, *MiticoMega*, 97, 2015.

people; focus on emotions (talking about anti-Semitism and Holocaust is inevitably a topic that touches not only the emotional part of ourselves but also our history); diffusion of *Black Notebooks*’ sentences (only the ones in which Heidegger mentions Jews) far from their original context; tendentious rewriting of narrative leading to ideological propaganda.

One of the most striking effects has been seeing people who are not familiar with Heidegger’s philosophical meditation affirming his anti-Semitism. It was remarkable for me seeing the tendency to reject Heidegger’s thinking in its totality, only with few exceptions. When I tried to ask people that are academics or that have spent the majority of their lives working in the field of Heidegger studies philosophical reasons of this point of view, the majority of answers were ‘because I read it on newspapers ... because the German editor of the *Black Notebooks* have stated this ... because some professor shared this interpretation’³⁴. For my philosophical education and for the tendency by whom I exercise thinking, these answers were and are *simply* unacceptable, because they are not grounded on philosophical arguments and are simply the effects of the widespread interpretation of these four volumes. When I asked directly, ‘have you read the *Schwarze Hefte*?’ the common answer was (is) in a very banal way, ‘No, I did not’. A clear tricky situation: the majority of Heidegger’s scholars have spoken and are still speaking on Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*, but only few of them have really read these four voluminous books, struggling to read a difficult form of German. Maybe it is redundant to say that there is a difference between true readers and students of Heidegger’s *Überlegungen* and *Anmerkungen* and others who speak about them *without* any cognition³⁵; perhaps, with this in mind it is necessary to have this debate made public. Every reader that has not read the Black Notebooks but, at the same time, has evaluated, judged and criticized those books reminds me to the anonymity with whom human being can act *without* thinking. It is not a merely fact of inaccuracy in judging, but a kind of ‘banality’ through which we ignore how thinking is an

³⁴ In Italy, for example, famous interpreters and translators of Heidegger, after having publicly admitted that they hadn’t read the *Black Notebooks*, supported the anti-Semite interpretation due to the excerpts they read in other books and in newspapers (the web is full of interviews, congresses and debates where one can listen to these words) and due to the trust in the German editor: since the editor of these volumes has written this, this is true – typical case, this last one, of how halo effect fallacy works.

³⁵ In the framework of the congress on Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* organised by Husserl Archive and FRIAS at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg on December 2015 the majority of the invited speakers have publicly declared, in the Q&A session, to have not read Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* even if their speeches were on this topic and, of course, they were an accusation against the Meßkirch’s philosopher. The principle of *relata refero* seemed to be the motto followed by the majority of the speakers. All the speeches are available in the website of the University: <https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/de/me-diathek/podcasts/freiburger-horizonte/heideggers-schwarze-hefte-ideologiefanfaelligkeit-der-intellektuellen-1>.

acting. Moreover, what caught my attention was the fact that in the frame of many congresses organized to discuss on Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, most of them were a true process against Heidegger, with the aggravating factors that the accused not only was dead, but he cannot "pretend" to have something to say and those who tried to tell a different side of the story were accused of being "Heidegger's lawyers" or "guardians" – *tertium non datur*. Again, a case of dual logic that does not provide any philosophical systematic interrogation.

Philosophically speaking, this dual logic is not the basis through which philosophy should proceed and moreover this is not how philosophical research reaches its outcomes. When we use the word *analysis* in the context of philosophical investigations, we should remember that it doesn't mean wrenching apart sentences from their context and putting them in very different contexts, adjusting them with other Heidegger's quotes from other works in order to 'square the circle'³⁶. This is a clear example of a cherry picking fallacy that, in terms of an argument, doesn't demonstrate, clarify or justify anything, with the exception of the idea that the single scholar has in his/her own mind. It is difficult to not agree with von Herrmann when he states that "the scandal is not to be found in these passages from the *Überlegungen* (*Ponderings*); rather, the only scandal is the distorted and disparaging, deeply corrupt reading of these passages (...) without any accompanying proof."³⁷

The widespread interpretation of Heidegger's notebooks grounded on anti-Semitism has been clearly finalized to receive a massive wave of consensus: focusing on how this has happened, we can easily recognize how the media have given their substantial contribution in creating a clear opinion of "the Nazi philosopher of Messkirch" among people – Heidegger himself was aware of this risk when he wrote on the dangers lurking in journalism and public opinion, not only in the *Black Notebooks*³⁸, but also in the *Contributions to Philosophy*³⁹.

³⁶ A remarkable comment has been done by the French philosopher Françoise Dastur: according her, the *Überlegungen* cannot be read with the cognition and awareness of what happened after 1941, but they need to be read according to the events (historical and political) that happened in the period they were written (1931–1941). Her emphasis on the need for an accurate historical contextualization of Heidegger's *Überlegungen* is considered to be the real and effective involvement of Heidegger's thinking in the Holocaust and the consequent implication for ethics. See F. Dastur, "Y a-t-il une "essence" de l'antisémitisme?", *Heidegger; die Juden, noch einmal*, P. Trawny, A. J. Mitchell (eds.) (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2015), pp. 96–97.

³⁷ Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, "The Role of Martin Heidegger's Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre", *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, ed. J. Malpas, I. Farin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), p. 92.

³⁸ «Es gehört zum besonderen Glück der flachen Köpfe, daß sie das Unheil, das sie wegfegt, nicht als solches zu denken vermögen, daß sie vielmehr bei ihrem Rechnen nach schuldig und nicht schuldig immer abgeleiteten Erscheinungen die Schuld geben und sich am Schauspiel des öffentlichen Meinungsbetriebs beteiligen», GA 97, p. 158; «Verheerender als die Hitzewelle der Atombombe ist der »Geist in der Gestalt des Weltjournalis-

After more than two years investigating Heidegger's *Schwarze Wachstuchhefte*⁴⁰, my idea is that that they need to be read and to be understood critically, entirely, and by comparing their topics with the other works (lessons, works for publication, letters, notes and so on) in which Heidegger was working on during the same years; given that, the *Black Notebooks* have not had an interpretative feature broader than other Heidegger works. *Black Notebooks* are simply attempts, basic attunements, belated notes. They are only work in progress-thoughts on the history of being but with no systematic structure; for these reasons, we can figure that they were for Heidegger a set of work files on which he penciled his ongoing thoughts. *Ponderings* (*Überlegungen*) and *Remarks* (*Anmerkungen*) are not a diary, neither a philosophical testament. They do not have an intimate tone like diaries usually have, and they don't give any last disposition in political issues; rather, they join the stylistic form of notes or aphorisms embodying theoretical content and a few private remarks and personal opinions. In their stylistic form, they are similar to the writing of *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* because they recall the same tone, even though the contents are more complex. Only after having accepted the decision to create a collection of completed works in 1973, did he decide to let the *Hefte* be published at the end of the *Gesamtausgabe*⁴¹.

mus. Jene vernichtet, indem sie nur auslöscht; dieser vernichtet, indem er den Schein von Sein errichtet auf dem Scheingrund der unbedingten Wurzellosigkeit. Der absolute Journalismus betäubt die heute Stil gewordene Angst vor dem Denken und sorgt so für die gründlichste Ausrottung des Denkens. Wir müssen uns und die Kommenden darauf bringen, daß inskünftig für lange Zeit das Denken ein kostbarer Schatz bleibt, den man am besten hütet, wenn man ihn tief vergräbt. Mit »Pessimismus« hat das nichts, aber viel mit Nüchternheit zu tun», GA 97, p. 460; «Die Herrschaft der öffentlichen Meinung ist schon so diktatorisch, daß jede Überlegung dieser Art einfach als »nazistisch« erklärt und damit unwirksam gemacht wird», GA 97, p. 128.

³⁹ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, GA 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1989); *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. by P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1999), pp. 26–29 and pp. 62–65.

⁴⁰ Francesca Brencio (ed.), *La pieta' del pensiero. Heidegger e i Quaderni Neri* (Passignano s. T.: Aguaplano – Officina del libro, 2015), in particular pp. 107–186; Ead., "Martin Heidegger and the thinking of evil: from the original ethics to the *Black Notebooks*", *Ius fugit. Revista de cultura Jurídica*, Universidad de Girona, Universidad de Zaragoza y Institución «Fernando el Católico», 19 (2016), pp. 87–134.

⁴¹ Perhaps it is useful to recall that the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* is happened violating Heidegger's last will, according to which the publication of the *Schwarze Wachstuchhefte* had to be printed only at the end of *Gesamtausgabe*. The administrators of Martin Heidegger's literary remains, Dr. Hermann Heidegger and his son Dr. Arnulf Heidegger however, against the dispositions of Heidegger's himself and his last assistant, F.-W. von Herrmann, senior philosophical advisor of Martin Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, have decided to anticipate the publication of these books in accordance with Vittorio Klostermann Verlag. See F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger. La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, p. 27.

Black Notebooks erroneously have been delivered into public discourse as the “hidden diary”⁴² or “philosophical last will”⁴³ of Martin Heidegger and, as such, they contain confessions on his anti-Semitism. The misinterpretation of what these books are, from a hermeneutical angle, has begun at the very beginning of the controversy. Step by step the misinterpretation has acquired a political hint till arriving to an ideological reading. This new controversy has been originated by the interpretation of the German editor of *Black Notebooks* who in the *Afterwords* published in GA 95 evokes the suspect of a new dimension of Heidegger’s meditation, that is its relationship with antisemitism and the contamination of this antisemitism with the history of being, till that moment hidden to all the scientific community. In his little book entitled *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* the German editor deepens only what is written in the *Afterwords*, enriching the previous thought with a remarkable *personal* interpretation of Heidegger’s *Seinsgeschichte* that has many contradictions.

At the very end of GA 95 we can read this passage: “The background of these remarks on “Judentum” as well as the interpretation of National Socialist everydayness build, of course, all those thoughts that we know from Heidegger about the essays on the history of being: the “Beiträgen zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)” (GA 65, 1936–1938), “Besinnung” (GA 66, 1938/39) as well as the later “Geschichte des Seyns” (GA 69, 1939/40), “Über den Anfang” (GA 70, 1941) and “Das Ereignis” (GA 71, 1941/42). In *Ponderings (Überlegungen)* we always find echoes of these works”⁴⁴. This sentence is very important to understand how the controversy has been originated. It is a simple *matter of fact* that, since *Black Notebooks* and the seven major ontological treatises have been written in the same period, Heidegger makes some references to his major works in the *Schwarze Hefte* because they are simply personal notes, a set of work-files in which he noted down his thoughts. The conjecture that has originated in the scandal is grounded

⁴² See D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger e gli ebrei. I Quaderni Neri* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2014).

⁴³ See P. Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2014), p. 14. Even if the third reprint of his book is different from the others, trying to adjust previous ideas with new critiques, Trawny is quite convinced of his interpretation and extends it to the role played by Heidegger’s thinking on the Holocaust in terms of responsibility.

⁴⁴ Peter Trawny, *Nachwort des Herausgebers*, in M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen vii–xi (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, GA 95, p. 452: «Den Hintergrund dieser Äußerungen über das “Judentum” sowie der Auslegung des nationalsozialistischen Alltags bilden freilich all jene Gedanken, die wir aus Heideggers zur selben Zeit entstehenden seinsgeschichtlichen Abhandlungen kennen: den “Beiträgen zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)” (GA 65, 1936–1938), der “Besinnung” (GA 66, 1938/39) sowie der späteren “Geschichte des Seyns” (GA 69, 1939/40), “Über den Anfang” (GA 70, 1941) und “Das Ereignis” (GA 71, 1941/42). Immer wieder finden sich in den “Überlegungen” Anklänge an diese Schriften».

on another point: (A) since in the *Black Notebooks* Heidegger talks about the seven major treatises and (B) since in the *Black Notebooks* he talks about the Jews following those stereotypes typical of Nazi propaganda, thus (C) we could assume that in these seven major treatises we could find some echoes of this propaganda inscribed into the history of being. The logical procedure is very clear, and all of us are familiar with this: if $A = B$ and $B = A$, thus $A = C$ (transitive relation). This inference has generated many others results (that we could call D, E, F and so on), all of them grounded on the sentence mentioned above. Perhaps, it is important to state that the first inference has never been clarified neither in terms of ontological thinking, nor in terms of logical assumptions. One of Trawny’s main arguments states that Heidegger would have contaminated his onto-historical thinking with the collections of stereotypes and prejudices circulated about Jews during the 20’s and 30’s: this argument allows the German editor to support the idea of contamination, provoked by anti-Semitism, but does not provide the reader with a *philosophical* explanation of how this anti-Semitism influences Heidegger’s ontological thinking. This last issue is left open even if some passages of his books seem to invite the reader to consider that there could be a kind of connection between Heidegger’s antisemitism and his philosophy.

If we go through the book *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung*, we can find that his approach proceeds through inferences that are fed with rhetorical questions and circular ideas, typical of a ‘petitio principii’. The *climax* is reached when the author leads the readers to the discovery of the ontological anti-Semitism. The book swings constantly between claiming overt assumptions and hinting at others. Moreover, the adjective “ontological”, it is never clarified and explained: it is assumed that every reader knows what, “ontological” means in the context of Heideggerian conceptuality. The absence of this clarification in the framework of Heidegger’s thinking makes every reference to *Seinsgeschichte* problematic, because it does not illuminate an understanding of what the history of being is. The German editor of the *Black Notebooks* does not enter into the ontological dimension of Heidegger’s thought, he only introduces assumptive interpretations into this thought, emphasizing those features that Heidegger attributes to the status of Jews as part of the modern world. The missed clarification of *Seinsgeschichte* and the insistence on Jews as Jewish are the only evidence provided to convince the reader of the correctness of the editor’s position. Some concepts are taken for granted and not clarified. Lastly, I cannot omit to say that the notion of anti-Semitism is used without any definition of what Semite means: the German editor of the *Black Notebooks* is accurate in his description of the “Jewish character” (*Judentum*) according to Heidegger but, it is not my role to remind the reader to clarify that the expression of anti-Semitism is usually defined as a behaviour against every Semite group, among which the Jews are only one social group. It would be more accurate to use the expression anti-Judaic instead of Anti-Semite with reference to his opinions on Jews.

If we assume that philosophy is storytelling, or better, a *narration* and not a *systematic interrogation*, one of the goals of the storyteller is to sew up these elements and provide a narration that perfectly complies with the above mentioned features, in which the philosophical dimension and systematic clarification of what is meant by Heidegger in the history of being finds *no place*. It is very difficult to not agree with von Herrmann when he claims:

A proper companion book to the *Überlegungen* [Ponderings] by the editor would have had to have a totally different conception and content. If such a book were to contain an explanation of the offending passages by the author, the explanation would have to work out and present the philosophical dimension of the “*Überlegungen*” (Ponderings) and the sundry critical statements in this context (...). Only this would have done justice to the three volumes of the *Black Notebooks*. Instead, the editor leaves out the philosophical dimension of the *Black Notebooks* entirely, and pursues his purely ideological-political agenda by completely ignoring the philosophical content of the *Überlegungen* (Ponderings) and their relation to other manuscripts featuring Heidegger’s onto-historical thinking. In this way he misleads readers⁴⁵.

There is a *locus* in which Heidegger talks about anti-Semitism, in *Remarks II* (*Anmerkungen II*) where he writes:

“Prophecy” is the technique for fending off what is destinal in history. It is an instrument of the will to power. That the great prophets are Jews is a fact whose secret has not yet been thought through. (Note for jackasses: this comment has nothing to do with “anti-Semitism,” which is as foolish and abominable as Christianity’s bloody and, above all, non-bloody attacks on “heathens.” The fact that Christianity even brands anti-Semitism as “un-Christian” is part of its highly developed and refined power technique)⁴⁶.

In this passage, Heidegger is claiming his distance from every form of anti-Semitism, which is defined as vulgar, and he is claiming that the issues concerning the power and the machination need to be addressed from the point of view of metaphysics, and this occurs within the space of western metaphysics – in which

⁴⁵ Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, “The Role of Martin Heidegger’s Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre”, *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ «“Prophetie“ ist die Technik der Abwehr des Geschicklichen der Geschichte. Sie ist ein Instrument des Willens zur Macht. Daß die großen Propheten Juden sind, ist eine Tatsache, deren Geheimes noch nicht gedacht worden (Anmerkung für Esel: mit »Antisemitismus« hat die Bemerkung nichts zu tun. Dieser ist so töricht und so verwerflich, wie das blutige und vor allem unblutige Vorgehen des Christentums gegen »die Heiden«. Daß auch das Christentum den Antisemitismus als »unchristlich« brandmarkt, gehört zur hohen Ausbildung der Raffinesse seiner Machttechnik)», GA 97, p. 159. For the English translation of this passage, see R. Polt, *References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger’s Black Notebooks, 1938–1948 Gesamtausgabe vols. 94–96 (2014) and 97 (2015)*, in: https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References_to_Jews_and_Judaism_in_Martin_Heidegger_s_Black_Notebooks_1938-1948.

the question of being is forgotten – and the space of western technical rationality⁴⁷. He is also stressing the link between anti-Semitism and Christendom: even though Christians have never endorsed anti-Semitism because it opposes the Gospel, they have forced conversions to Christianity, e.g. genocide of the pagans. It is from these preliminary considerations that we can understand the passage in *Remarks I* (*Anmerkungen I*): “On this basis one must assess what it means, for thinking that enters the concealed, initial essence of the history of the Western, to meditate on the first beginning among the Greeks, which remained outside the Jewish character and thus outside the Christian one”⁴⁸.

It is in this slippery field⁴⁹ that we find a kind of variation of Tranwy’s interpretation, the one proposed by the Italian scholar Donatella Di Cesare. Following the sentence contained in the middle of the second notebook (*Gesamtausgabe* 95) when Heidegger writes that the issue of Jews (*Judenfrage*) and their position in the world is *not a racial one* but a *metaphysical one*⁵⁰, Di Cesare has considered this sentence as the evident proof of Heidegger’s metaphysical anti-Semitism. Who has been through Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* in all their extension and has a strong knowledge of Heidegger’s thinking should know that, with this sentence, Heidegger is not claiming that the Jews *as Jewish* have a particular metaphysical characterisation, rather they are part of the modernity that has lost the meaning of the being. For this reason, they are inscribed into the metaphysical space typical of western metaphysics such as Christians, Russians, Americans, Communists and so on. In other words, the role played by the Jews is the same role played by mankind unable to consider the oblivion of being and nihilism and, for this reason, their position into the world is a metaphysical one. Maybe the Italian interpreter was searching for a particular “proof” that supported her interpretation but, as such, this interpretation is the result only of a “confirmation bias”, because Di Cesare considers the Jews *as Jewish* in terms of *metaphysical subject* and every interpreter that follows this pathway – but not Heidegger himself. What Heidegger has in

⁴⁷ On this topic, I refer the reader to S. Vietta, “*Etwas rast um den Erdball ...*”, *Martin Heidegger: Ambivalente Existenz und Globalisierungskritik* (Paderborn: Fink Verlag 2015).

⁴⁸ «Von hier aus ist zu ermessen, was für das Denken in das verborgene anfängliche Wesen der Geschichte des Abendlandes das Andenken an den ersten Anfang im Griechentum bedeutet, das außerhalb des Judentums und d.h. des Christentums geblieben», GA 97, p. 20. On Heidegger’s critique toward Christianity and Catholicism see, Francesca Brencio, *The fugue of Being. Heidegger’s critique toward the Jewish-Christian tradition in the context of Black Notebooks (1931–1948)*, in “Heidegger Jahrbuch”, Alber Verlag, 11–12, forthcoming in 2017.

⁴⁹ On the pathway inaugurated by Trawny, we found Jean-Luc Nancy’s interpretation of Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* and Donatella Di Cesare’s works. See J. L. Nancy, *Banalité de Heidegger* (Paris: Galilée, 2015); Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger & Sons. Eredità e futuro di un filosofo* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri 2015).

⁵⁰ GA 96, p. 243.

mind – in his total ignorance of Jewish world – is to stress how all the modernity is the result of metaphysics and, as such, the ground of modern nihilism. It is not possible to separate Heidegger's meditation on western metaphysics with the issue of being, since they are strictly related. At the core of Heidegger's interest and writings there is not the *Judenfrage* or, more in general, any attempt to talk about Jews as Jewish: rather, there is only the insistence with whom he tried to answer to the most ancient question of the history of philosophy: what is the being? The crafting of the portrait of Heidegger's interest to talk about Jews has not simply been the result of a cutting and pasting of quotations from *Black Notebooks*, but the logical and sentimental consequence of an image of Jews that the Italian interpreter draws as metaphysical and that she ascribes to Heidegger⁵¹. Using Jeff Malpas' words,

... the claim that Heidegger's thinking is anti-Semitic at its core cannot be supported merely by showing that Heidegger expressed or held anti-Semitic views – and this would remain the case even if it were Heidegger himself who made that claim (...). What needs to be shown is that anti-Semitism is indeed at work in the thinking, and that means showing where and how anti-Semitic attitudes are actually present in, and operative on, that thinking⁵².

On the pathway inaugurated by these positions, we find also specific consequences on the relationship between Heidegger's meditation and the Holocaust. The insistence with whom mainly Trawny, Di Cesare, and Nancy advance the hypothesis that Heidegger's thought would be involved in the Holocaust is something that needs to be proved *philosophically* and not with cherry picking procedures. There is no evidences in Heidegger's meditation of a thought that is the philosophical ground for the "final solution", nor that this thinking has somehow influenced the National Socialism and any form of antisemitism. It is my conviction that Heidegger felt a personal responsibility toward the Holocaust as did every

⁵¹ Under this respect, it has been the recent work of the Italian philosopher Leonardo Messinese to clarify this point with accuracy. Messinese claims that Di Cesare's remarks on Heidegger's consideration of the Jews are the result of her consideration of metaphysical essence and are drawn also from the work written in 1932 by Waldemar Gurian in the book entitled *Um des Reiches Zukunft* in which the expression "metaphysical anti-Semitism" is present. Once the portrait of the metaphysical Jew is drawn, Di Cesare – according Messinese – deepens this portrait building a series of metaphysical opposition, all of them characterising the Jews as *Jewish*, in a metaphysical meaning till arriving, through a crescendo, to confirm her idea of a metaphysical anti-Semitism and to advance the hypothesis that Heidegger's thought would be involved in the Holocaust. See Leonardo Messinese, "La 'questione ebraica' nei Quaderni Neri considerata alla luce della "critica alla metafisica", F.-W. von Herrmann, F. Alfieri, *Martin Heidegger: La verità sui Quaderni Neri*, pp. 386–391. On the same topic – the critique to the concept of Metaphysical anti-Semitism – see also M. Borghi, *Antisemitismo metafisico? Eudia*, 9, 2015.

⁵² J. Malpas, "On the Philosophical Reading of Heidegger: Situating the Black Notebooks", in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, p. 20.

German for that period of his life, believed in this political movement, however without knowing what was happening in the concentration camps, as he wrote in the letter to Karl Jasper dated April 8th 1950⁵³. Those interpreters that have considered Heidegger's words on gas chambers and agriculture as an *equivalence of facts* are quite irresponsible, since they tendentiously use Heidegger's thoughts and remarks only to draw a portrait that fits with their narrative and that is not Heidegger's thinking. What Heidegger is remarking about in that context is that technique and technology reveal a specific way of understanding (and using) the world, animals as well as human beings

If these reflections have their philosophical specificity, we need to understand two important point: firstly, how Jews enter into modernity with all the characterization typical of the historical subjects that are inscribed into the metaphysical space and, secondly, in which relationship the question of being is with the critique toward modernity.

IV. *Seinsfrage*, the critique toward modernity and the Jews

If we would summarise how the issue of being comes to Heidegger, in order to address the subject of this paragraph, we could say that it comes from a double track: from a logical one and from a phenomenological one, whose finding their point of encounter into the living being in its historical movement, as Heidegger's early writings show. The philosophy of living being (*das Lebendige*) meets the doctrine of categories in the period between 1916–1917: it will be the significant contribution of Aristotle and Husserl's *Logical Investigations* to let Heidegger deepen the themes that will expose in his Marburg lectures till his *magnum opus*, *Sein und Zeit*. In his early lectures in Freiburg, the hermeneutical interpretation of factual life becomes hermeneutical phenomenology and ontological-existential analysis of *Dasein* in its understanding of being. This analysis is guided by the general question of being that assumes two characterizations: the being as fundamental ontological constitution of factual human being, and the being as ontological constitution of every ontic sphere among which the human being exists and understands the being. The ontological issue becomes a hermeneutics of facticity. It is in this new approach that Heidegger focuses how the categories typical of factual being and the categories typical of every being with whom he gets into a relationship are inscribed into only one issue, that is the issue of being, that means the issue of being's categories and meaning⁵⁴. The point that Heidegger reaches

⁵³ M. Heidegger/K. Jaspers, *Briefwechsel mit Karl Jaspers (1920–1963)*, Hrsg. von W. Biemel und H. Saner, Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 201–203; W. Biemel, H. Saner (eds.), *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920–1963)*, trans. G. E. Aylesworth (New York: Humanity Book, 2003), pp. 139–141.

⁵⁴ «The basic philosophical question of being is not the question of the human being – "philosophy of existence" – on the contrary, the question of being first provides the possi-

with *Being and Time* and with the Freiburg courses between 1927–1929 is that the being is historical in its essence. It is in 1930 when the ontological-existential analysis of *Dasein* will be abandoned in favour of the being-historical thinking (*seinsgeschichtliches Denkens*) and the Aristotelian question will be thought according to the historical and ontological movement. It will be the conference entitled *The essence of truth* (1930) that will inaugurate a new pathway of the same thinking, even if a significant point of foundation will be reached through the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* (1936/37–1938), the first treatise among the seven ontological ones Heidegger will write within 1944. If we go through the Appendix of *Besinnung* we can read: “Since the spring of 1932 the plan has been firmly established in its main features and it achieves its first shaping in the projecting-opening called ‘From Enowning’. Everything moves toward this projecting-opening, including *Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Sein und Zeit*, which also belongs to the domain of these mindful deliberations”⁵⁵. The Enowning-historical thinking originates from within the fundamental ontological thinking of the question of being. “Being-historical thinking becomes what it is from within a transformation (*Wandel*) of fundamental-ontological thinking – and not by turning away from that first pathway of the question of being, as if enowning-historical thinking would begin entirely anew and without precedent”⁵⁶. The truth of being will be now addressed by Heidegger in terms of the experience of its own historical enactment: “the truth of being” as “being-historical thinking”⁵⁷. The term “being-historical” indicates that “being’s essential sway (*Wesen*) is grasped ‘historically’”⁵⁸. Being-historical thinking is a thinking of the truth of being. As pointed out by von Herrmann, in the seminar held in Le Thor in 1969⁵⁹ Heidegger did talk about a topology of being and of topological thinking but, at the same time, he never suggested that topological thinking succeeds being-historical thinking of the truth of being. Rather, he claimed that the “truth of being” is “elucidated” by “place of being”

bility, and thereby especially the limits, of the question of the human being – already because this being must necessarily be grounded anew in his essence by way of the question of being. Therefore, that essence never simply lies at hand for philosophizing to snap up», GA 94, p. 41.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Besinnung*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, GA 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1997); *Mindfulness*, trans. by P. Emad and T. Kallary, (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 419–428.

⁵⁶ Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, „Contributions to Philosophy and Enowning-Historical Thinking”, *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott, Susan M. Schoenbohm, Daniela Vallega-Neu, and Alejandro Vallega (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p.105.

⁵⁷ GA 65, p. 3.

⁵⁸ GA 65, p. 32.

⁵⁹ See Heidegger, *Seminare*, Hrsg. von Curt Oehwadt, GA 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2005), pp. 326–371.

(*Ortschaft des Seins*). “Because “place of being” is solely an elucidation of the “truth of being,” topological thinking too belongs to being-historical thinking and is itself enowning-historical thinking”⁶⁰.

The being-historical thinking of being has its own structure (*Gefüge*) that has nothing to do with mankind, not with political thoughts, not with ideological ideas, among which anti-Semitism can be counted. It is precisely in this point, namely in the analysis of the structure that the being has and that it shows in terms of its being-historical truth, that the conception of an “ontological anti-Semitism” is not philosophically tenable because being’s structure has nothing to do with human history and human events. When we overlap the ontological level of what the being is and its historicity with the history of mankind as synonymous to the history of being we make a mistake. Heidegger himself has clarified, many times, that the history of mankind is distinct from the *Seinsgeschichte*, for example, within the Nietzsche lectures: “The history of being is not the history of man, neither the history of mankind or the history of the human reference to the being. The history of being is the being itself and only this”⁶¹. The interpretation according to whom the ontological anti-Semitism is inner to the ontological dimension of Heidegger’s thinking is grounded only on the inference that claims: since the *Black Notebooks* and the seven major treatises are coeval and since in the *Black Notebooks* Heidegger talks about Jews using personal prejudices, thus we could assume that the being-historical thinking exposed in these seven major treatises has anti-Semitic prejudices. The more important point that need to be recalled again is that the expression through which Heidegger talks about Jews are not typical of the being-historical thinking, rather are typical of the feature of modernity inscribed into western metaphysics and merely personal opinions.

In more than 1900 pages of the *Black Notebooks (Gesamtausgabe 94–97)*, Heidegger uses the words *Jude*, *jüdisch*, *Judentum* 14 times⁶²; in just 7 times these words are used with an anti-Judaic tone, the other times are just in connection with the adjective “Christian”, creating a linguistic plexus that indicates the Jewish-Christian matrix of the Western society which, according to him, is the beginning

⁶⁰ F.-W. von Herrmann, „Contributions to Philosophy and Enowning-Historical Thinking”, p. 125.

⁶¹ «Die Seinsgeschichte ist weder die Geschichte des Menschen und eines Menschentums noch die Geschichte des menschlichen Bezugs zum Setenden und zum Sein. Die Seinsgeschichte ist das Sein selbst und nur dieses», Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, Neske Verlag, Pfullingen 1988, p.489.

⁶² Even if the quantity is not philosophically important, however it shows the scarcity with whom Heidegger talks about Jew. The *Judenfrage* was not a priority for him and «let alone an essential part of his history of Being», J. Grondin, *The critique and Rethinking of Being and Time in the first Black Notebooks*, in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, p. 106.

of the oblivion of being and the beginning of nihilism, into which politics, secularism, society and institutions are inscribed⁶³. In the 7 anti-Judaic passages of Black Notebooks, Jews are described according the stereotypes typical of the early XX century, described also in Hannah Arendt's *The origins of Totalitarianism*: they are people who have a particular ability to calculate and to handle money, capacities that allow them to increase their power⁶⁴. They are not involved in political affairs, because they are "without ground" and "without land" (*Bodenlose*)⁶⁵: they are *Bondelose* not only due to their Biblical origins but more for their capacity to thrive without being attached to a given country. They are the first to live according the principle of race and this is why they live longer than other people⁶⁶. Due to their ability to calculate and increase resources, Jews contribute to the development of *Machenschaft* in the western society⁶⁷. The sentences through which Heidegger has been accused of anti-Semitism, such as "groundlessness", "absence of history", "absence of world", "empty rationality", "the forgetfulness of being", "machination of beings", "absence of bounds as such", "the uprootedness of all beings from being" – just to quote some of them – are not what characterizes the spirit of "international Jewry" *as such*, but the *modernity in itself* with all its connection to the oblivion of being. Under this respect, it is hard to disagree with Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann when he claims that:

... everyone who has carefully worked through the ontohistorical treatises – that is, the main texts of ontohistorical thinking – sees at once that the concepts listed are just ontohistorical concepts by means of which Heidegger characterizes the spirit of the newest new age and thus the present age, insofar as this age principally understands itself from out of the spirit of the mathematical natural science and modern technology. And this means that these concepts are not anti-Semitic as such (i. e., they do not refer to the Jewish spirit only but reflect the spirit of the present time). In other words, when Heidegger characterizes the spirit of "international Jewry" he includes it within the modern spirit of the present age. (...) The ontohistorical approach has its own conceptual; it is not anti-Semitic in its essence and not the result of an anti-Semitic outlook. Instead, the ontohistorical approach arises from a phenomenological perspective that

⁶³ «In the end, we have not undergone any trial at all, indeed have not even prepared for one – we even lack the knowledge of the way to such a preparation for a trial. Instead, there has been an escape into Christianity, or some other frenzy has instituted itself; one gads about in the supercilious and babbles on. All this in a casual ignorance of being; under these circumstances, how are beings as a whole supposed to concern us at all? There is talk of nothingness and of us being set into nothingness – as if that were a word, or meant something, whereby the most groundless indifference no longer appeared. We have indeed no longer anything to champion – even this possession of our Dasein – the antiquity of the Greeks – must not be conquered by us – how should we truly await here | the coming might of being», GA 94, p. 31.

⁶⁴ GA 95, pp. 96–97; GA 96, p. 46 and p. 56.

⁶⁵ GA 96, p. 46.

⁶⁶ GA 96, p. 56.

⁶⁷ GA 95, p. 97; GA 96, p. 56; GA 95, p. 325.

experiences the phenomena in their own historicity, making them visible and intelligible⁶⁸.

What has been considered as evidence of anti-Semite thinking has been *only and simply* a circular argumentation and a misrepresentation of the most important part of Heidegger's meditation – the history of being. Due to the need of a consistent hermeneutical approach, it would be remarkable to find that every definition of Heidegger's anti-Semitism had been philosophically proved and had been evidenced throughout the entire *Gesamtausgabe*. In order to claim that anti-Semitism is relevant in his works, this claim must *also* involve all the history of being (*Seinsgeschichte*) and the seven major works on the *Seinsgeschichte*. However, this has not been done and the hermeneutical approach chosen by scholars who support anti-Semitism in Heidegger's thinking is very different. As stated by Jean Grondin, "what Heidegger writes about the Jews is related to his view of modernity, indeed the history of Western civilization since the Greeks, as an epoch characterized by the emergence of a calculating rationality, which he understands as a forgetfulness of being (...). The Jews play no part whatsoever"⁶⁹.

If the features typical of the Jewish character are typical of Heidegger's view of modernity, we need to stress how the issue of being meets the modernity and its consequences. In Heidegger's thinking we deal with an epoch-making hand-to-hand between the issue of being and critique toward modernity. His meditation, since 1933 onwards, is a constant interrogation on the relationship that the *Seinsfrage* has with modernity, a relationship made by exclusion and nihilism. The issue of being in his being-historical dimension is strictly tied up with the critique towards the western metaphysics and its oblivion of being, whose Jewish-Christian-Hellenistic tradition is just one among many effects. Metaphysics thinks being through a representational thinking, that arises from Plato and that crosscuts the western tradition till arriving to Nietzsche. Metaphysical thinking departs from what is present in its presence, and thus represents it in terms of its ground as something grounded. "Plato's thinking remains decisive in changing forms. Metaphysics is Platonism. Nietzsche characterizes his philosophy as reversed Platonism. With the reversal of metaphysics which was already accomplished by Karl Marx, the most extreme possibility of philosophy is attained. It has entered its final stage"⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ F.-W. von Herrmann, "The Role of Martin Heidegger's Notebooks within the Context of His Oeuvre", in J. Malpas, I. Farin (eds.), *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1931–1941)*, pp. 91–92.

⁶⁹ J. Grondin, "The critique and Rethinking of Being and Time in the first Black Notebooks", p. 98.

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens*, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, GA 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2007 – IV ed.); *The end of Philosophy and the task of thinking*,

The Jewish-Christian consideration of human being, as *ens creatum* who has been created by a Creator (God), has changed from the very beginning the conception of philosophy and the relationship between man and being, modifying it into the relationship between man and God (Scholastic philosophy), man and Nature (Renaissance), man and science (Enlightenment), situating on the same pathway inaugurated by Platonism: "As long as the essence of humanity remains predetermined by animality (*animalitas*), one can only ask what man is. The question of who man is, is never possible. For this who-question, as a question, is already the originally other and unique answer to the question about man – this question itself establishes man in his essence as the insistence in the truth of being. It is that question about man that does not just ask beyond him, about his cause and the like, but which does not ask about him at all, does not ask for the sake of man but for the sake of being, for this displaces into the encounter with man as the ground of truth. Only this question overcomes the modern anthropological determination of man, and with it, all previous anthropology – Christian Hellenistic-Jewish and Socratic-Platonic"⁷¹. It is precisely in the *Ponderings VI* that Heidegger writes: "«Even all doctrines (e.g., the Judeo-Christian) of the human being which determine him immediately on the basis of the relation to a "God" are anthropological – | whereby indeed in non-Christian anthropology, and in ones that would be such and cannot, Christian anthropology and its doctrinal content must play an essential role, even if only by being inverted"⁷².

The Christianisation of the Greek world has been the starting point of the Jewish-Christian matrix of western society that has instituted the tyranny of monotheism⁷³: "On this basis one must assess what it means, for thinking that enters the concealed, initial essence of the history of the Occident, to meditate on the first beginning among the Greeks, which remained outside Judaism and thus outside Christianity"⁷⁴. Western metaphysics is responsible for the forgottenness of being (*Vergessenheit des Seins*), resulting in the reduction of the being (*Sein*) to a being (*Seiende*) among other beings, and for this reason it is also the space of destruction and of nihilism in which both Christianity and Judaism are embedded:

in *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row Publ., 1972), p. 57.

⁷¹ GA 95, p. 322. This English translation has been done by R. Polt, in *References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1938–1948 Gesamtausgabe vols. 94–96 (2014) and 97 (2015)*, see: https://www.academia.edu/11943010/References_to_Jews_and_Judaism_in_Martin_Heidegger_s_Black_Notebooks_1938-1948.

⁷² GA 94; *Ponderings II–VI (Black Notebooks 1931–1938)*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2016), p. 345.

⁷³ GA 97, p. 369.

⁷⁴ «Von hier aus ist zu erweisen, was für das Denken in das verborgene anfängliche Wesen der Geschichte des Abendlandes das Andenken an den ersten Anfang im Griechentum bedeutet, das außerhalb des Judentums und d.h. des Christentums geblieben», GA 97, p. 21.

The forms of modern Christianity as the genuine conof godlessness. Catholicism, which no longer has anything whatever to do with medieval Christianity. "Confessional front": Roman curialism in the form of German Protestantism; the youngest form of cultural Christianity: Christianity as a mask for the assertion of a now-brittle global domination. German Christians: an un-Christian and anti-Christian misunderstanding of the Germans. And yet: Christianity has created and aroused powers of the spirit, of discipline, and of strength of soul, powers which are not to be thought of as missing from Western history, especially since, even if only in reverse, they continue to be effective and still offer "support" to individuals. But: the great decisions do not occur there. Christianity has long ago lost all power of origination; it has made its own history historiological⁷⁵.

Black Notebooks show with a particular clarity how Heidegger thinks about modernity: modernity is the age of poverty, of desolation, of "destitute time" – using Rilke's words. It is in the context of this desolation that Heidegger shows the connection between philosophy and technology. In the *Überlegungen* and in the *Anmerkungen* we encounter for more than 200 times in all the four volumes the word *Machenschaft*. Its usage is usually in connection with the question of being and with nihilism. Progress, technicity and machination are considered by Heidegger as particular features of modernity since they do not only conceal the unfolding ownmost of being, restricting human being into the 'darkest night'. The being-historical thinking encounters modernity in all its nothingness: "We proceed still in the era of progress – with the difference that, once and for a certain period, it was pursued as an international good, while today it is simply declared as a challenge among nations: "best" movies and "fastest" airplanes – the "safest" means; not resting on anything in order to be to its height – but holding everything immediately in one shot, and then? Stumbling in the big vacuum and screaming highest than others. Progress (...) becomes now a pincers more powerful that grips human being in its nothingness"⁷⁶. In a modern age, thinking is no longer possible, but only being educated to ideology: "The unity of creed and culture emerges clearer in modern forms of human being – in the world vision – not only due to their dependence towards what is Christian. Education and educational institutes as deliberate execution, "supervision" of education in its passage to ideology in terms of strict acting (...). Meditation is totally unknown and necessarily an obstacle".⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Ponderings II–VI*, p. 380.

⁷⁶ «Wir bewegen uns immer noch im Zeitalter des Fortschritts – nur daß er eine Zeitlang als internationales Gut angestrebt wurde und heute als der Wettbewerb der Nationen ausgerufen wird; die »besten« Filme und die »schnellsten« Flugzeuge – die »sichersten« Mittel, nirgendwo mehr zu verweilen und auf etwas zuzuwachsen – sondern alles unversehens in einem zu besitzen und dann? in der großen Leere taumeln und sich überschreien. Der Fortschritt (...) wird jetzt zur noch schärferen Zange, die den Menschen in seine Leere einklemmt», Heidegger, *Überlegungen V* p. 387.

⁷⁷ «In den neuzeitlichen Formen des Menschseins – in der Weltanschauung – kommt, nicht nur wegen ihrer Abhängigkeit vom Christlichen, die Einheit von »Glaubens« und »Kulturs« verschärft zum Vorschein. Schulung und Erziehungsanstalten als bevufte Ein-

The main feature of modernity is the absence of mindfulness (*Besinnung*). The vacuity in which philosophy, as well as science, is embedded is a symptom of a new way of thinking, that is without ground. Nietzsche and Hegel will become Heidegger's privileged authors, as well as Anaximander, "the poets of poverty" and the pre-Socratic thinkers. The poverty of thinking, the massive usage of technicity, the domination of *Machenschaft*, the brutality of the political scenario of '30s and '40s, the interference of Christianity in every field of human life, the University reduced to an 'high school', the awareness of the power and influence of media in daily life are some of the main characterizations with whom Heidegger describes the modernity in the context of *Black Notebooks*. If we compare these thoughts with those contained in *The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead', The Age of the World Picture*, the second part of his lectures on Nietzsche – just to name the works written in the same years of *Ponderings (Überlegungen)* and *Remarks (Anmerkungen)* – we easily find similar features and similar *Stimmungen*.

If thinking is an *engagement* by and for the truth of being, then

when thinking comes to an end by slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring a validity for itself as *τέχνη* as an instrument of education and therefore as a classroom matter and later a cultural concern. By and by philosophy becomes a technique for explaining from highest causes. One no longer thinks; one occupies oneself with philosophy.⁷⁸

V. Thinking without a bannister

As being well-known from the philosophical community and from the majority of scholars, the expression "thinking without a bannister" comes from Hannah Arendt. She writes:

You said 'groundless thinking'. I have a metaphor which is not quite that cruel, and which I have never published but kept for myself. I call it thinking without a bannister. In German, *Denken ohne Geländer*. That is, as you go up and down the stairs you can always hold onto the bannister so that you don't fall down. But we have lost this bannister.⁷⁹

With this metaphor, Arendt describes the reflective attitude that seeks to understand without preconceived categories and judging without the set of ideological rules. However, this metaphor is something more than an analogy: it is a kind of

richtung. »Überwachung« der weltanschaulichen Erziehung als straffer Betrieb (...). Die Besinnung ist ihr fremd und notwendig eine Fessel», GA 95, pp. 17–19.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus*, in *Wegmarken*, Hrsg. von Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, GA 9, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1976), p. 314; *Letter on Humanism*, in *Pathmarks*, W. Mc Neill (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 242.

⁷⁹ Hannah Arendt, "On Hannah Arendt," in M. A. Hill, *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 336–337.

compass, an indication through which to read and interpret Heidegger's thinking. When we deal with Heidegger in fact, we deal with many bannisters – ideological, theological, metaphysical, scientific and so on. We deal, in other words, with the tendency to read his works and get in confrontation with his thinking using hermeneutical and theoretical lenses that are not into Heidegger's meditation, but that are only *what we are searching for* in his thinking. This tendency (not always aware) is typical of human being: adjusting thinking in comparison with its 'needs' and 'desire' (also those philosophical), sometimes with professional careers, other times with the need to step out from anonymity. Moreover, this tendency is amplified by our philosophical (or theological) education. These needs for bannisters was clear to Heidegger himself:

Because we are speaking against 'humanism' people fear a defence of the inhuman and a glorification of barbaric brutality. For what is more 'logical' than that for somebody who negates humanism nothing remains but the affirmation of inhumanity? Because we are speaking against 'logic' people believe we are demanding that the rigor of thinking be renounced and in its place the arbitrariness of drives and feelings be installed and thus that 'irrationalism' be proclaimed true. For what is more illogical than that who ever speaks against the logical is defending the alogical? Because we are speaking against 'values' people are horrified at a philosophy that ostensibly dares to despise humanity's best qualities. For what is more 'logical' than that a thinking that denies values must necessarily pronounce everything valueless? Because we say that the being of the human being consists in 'being-in- the-world' people find that the human being is downgraded to a merely terrestrial being, whereupon philosophy sinks into positivism. For what is more 'logical' than that whoever asserts the worldliness of human being holds only this life as valid, denies the beyond, and renounces all 'Transcendence'? Because we refer to the word of Nietzsche on the 'death of God' people regard such a gesture as atheism. For what is more 'logical' than that whoever has experienced the death of God is godless? Because in all the respects mentioned we everywhere speak against all that humanity deems high and holy our philosophy teaches an irresponsible and destructive 'nihilism'. For what is more 'logical' than that whoever roundly denies what is truly in being puts himself on the side of nonbeing and thus professes the pure nothing as the meaning of reality?⁸⁰

Thinking 'against' something does not mean pointing toward the negative, but generally this is how people are used to think. I incline to think that speaking 'against' is simply destroying bannisters, in terms of consolidated certainties, conjectures, inferences, and so on. Speaking 'against' is very similar to Nietzschean 'philosophising with a hammer' but not in terms of substituting values with other values, since it could mean building other bannisters, rather in terms of deconstruction of that kind of thinking in which all of us are embedded, as well as ideological representations. The risk of this approach is not nihilism or relativism, against which Heidegger struggled for all his life, rather the ability to perform a 'new

⁸⁰ GA 9; "Letter on 'Humanism'", in *Pathmarks*, ed. Will McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 263–264.

thinking' able to abandon bannisters: "We do not know goals, and are only a pathway"⁸¹.

Thinking must proceed without a bannister. In accepting that necessary risk of failure, which will be an inconvenient step outside the logic of consensus. "We all still need an education in thinking, and before that first a knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking means"⁸². It is in this frame that it is required to put distance between those thinkers who oversimplify thinking into the "yes or no" logic which creates a dangerous ground for massive consensus that can only repeat thoughts without investigating their argumentation, their validity and their ideological assumptions. It is precisely in this way of proceeding that ideology builds bannisters and feeds the tendency to bend thinking towards the 'left' or towards that 'right' or to use slogans – 'the King is dead', 'Heidegger is safe'. A remarkable hermeneutical approach to thinking shows us that we do not need other philosophical heroes. Perhaps it is not our duty, as thinkers, to 'save' the world. Every demand of philosophical heroism is a failure at its very beginning. "The philosophy to come must be an *exhortation* – exhortation to the being of the "there."⁸³

To conclude, I would like to observe that the "*Black Notebooks* affair" underline the limit of our age still in need of "bannisters", the majority of them ideological. Maybe it is still our inability of thinking our recent history that doesn't allow philosophy to jump outside its self-defence, "unable to generate a new history and is hence condemned to keep on re-hashing past history to prove its own existence, or even to prove its own crimes"⁸⁴. Once we have accused – or absolved – Heidegger of being a Nazi or an anti-Semite, we have fallen into the same intellectual trap: we strive thinking against a battle that is still *beyond* those bannisters and that is fed by journalism and, unfortunately, by some academic scholars as well. The amount of ink that has been spilled on the *Black Notebooks*, as well as on some of their interpretations, have drawn a very questionable image of this debate – and of academia in general. The point is not merely the anti-Semitic reading of Heidegger's belated notes, that are allowed to exist even if philosophically incorrect, but more in general the tendency towards an oversimplification. Perhaps, Gadamer's words should be considered more carefully: "When people claim to be "against" Heidegger – or even "for" him – then they make fools of themselves. One cannot circumvent thinking so easily"⁸⁵.

⁸¹ GA 66, p. 9.

⁸² GA 14, p. 72.

⁸³ GA 94, p. 12.

⁸⁴ J. Baudrillard, "Necrospective around Martin Heidegger", in *Screened Out (Radical Thinkers)* (New York: Verso Publ. 2014), p. 19.

⁸⁵ H. G. Gadamer, *Heidegger's ways*, trans. by John W. Staley (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1994), p. 112.