

ON RECONCILIATION

A series of reflections on the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, from 1925 to 1975, as a means to think about moral responsibility, ethical indebtedness, and the role of intellectuals in times of political urgency. These reflections were initiated by Dora García, who was joined by Simon Asencio, Rebecka Katz Thor, Nikola Mirković, Anna-Sophie Springer, Mark Thomas, Yuliya Tsutserova, Etienne Turpin, and Adriano Wilfert Jensen.

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ON RECONCILIATION/ÜBER VERSÖHNUNG
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In times like these, in these great times.¹

In times like these when it seems that a great paradigm shift is about to happen. A time when Fascism advances, unperturbed and wrapped in unbridled capitalism, protecting the few from the many. A paradoxical time, when, however hypocritically, the media is suddenly paying attention to the voices of women ignored thus far. In times like these when patriarchy, finally, seems to be feeling the heat. In such paradoxical times, in times like these, an acknowledged harasser of women and the embodiment of patriarchy holds the highest political office on the planet, while feminism seems triumphant in the midst of its fourth wave. It is in times like these, in these great times, when the private behavior of artists and intellectuals—while previously considered of minor importance—now greatly matters for the reception of their work, it is in these times, that we read again the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger.

Their letters cover a period of fifty years, from 1925 to 1975, years spanning the rise of Fascism, the Second World War, the Denazification period in Germany, the creation of the state of Israel, the split of Germany, the Cold War; the development of

¹ This phrase makes a reference to Karl Kraus's essay from 1914, "In These Great Times," in *Karl Kraus: In these Great Times*, ed. Harry Zohn, trans. Joseph Fabry (Montreal: Engendra Press, 1976); access text online: abitofpitch.com/170-In_these_great_times.

8 phenomenology, existentialism, and structuralism; the birth of Cultural Studies. As an artist myself, I am interested in this correspondence because the relationship between Arendt and Heidegger appears extremely relevant today. I wonder, does it provide a template, a pattern to help us better understand both the historical circumstances of when they were written and the complex issues we are confronted with today?

When they first met in 1925 and began writing to each other, she was nineteen and he was thirty-five. The relation, then, could have been identical to hundreds of student-teacher liaisons—trite and predictable. But she was Hannah Arendt, a young and brilliant Jewish student, while Heidegger was on his way to soaring academic fame with *Being and Time*, and their relationship was anything but ordinary. By 1950, when they met again, Germany had lost the war, and it was she who was a world-famous author and he, an unrepentant supporter of Nazism, had become a pariah. Yet, she still looked up to him and, in what could have been a very clichéd reckoning, even met his wife.

After this re-encounter, they seemed to share a long-lasting, quiet, and mutually supportive intellectual camaraderie. However, this is not entirely true. Heidegger never really acknowledged Arendt as an equal, always downplaying her as just his admirer and follower. Arendt never really made much of an effort to correct the absurdity of this anachronism, instead developing (first in her diary) the concept of *reconciliation* and using

9 it as the basis for her mission to reconcile with Heidegger. Arendt, all at once, made up her mind, and in Letter 48, dated 9 February 1950, she wrote of their meeting:

When the waiter spoke your name (I had not actually expected you, had not received the letter, after all), it was as if time suddenly stood still. Then all at once I became aware of something I would not have confessed before, neither to myself nor to you nor to anyone—how, after Friedrich had given me the address, the power of the impulse had mercifully saved me from committing the only really inexcusable act of infidelity and forfeiting my life.²

→p. 105

With the project *On Reconciliation*, I initiated a collaborative reading, re-reading, again and once more, of this great correspondence. If history is fractal, through these letters, I seek to understand what in their relation then could speak to us now. Their reconciliation happened quite suddenly—though not without problems. And in these great times, times unlike but perhaps not dissimilar to theirs, we too must reconcile.

Today, we might be able to brush off artists and intellectuals who have fallen short of our moral standards, because to ignore them would not harm us, we may not miss their work and, in many cases, we may even thrive without them. But we cannot

² Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, "Letter 48, from 9 February 1950," in *Letters 1925–1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004), 59.

10 ignore Heidegger, even if we wanted to. His thinking is everywhere, in every thread of thought we pull on. And if we cannot forgive him, and if we cannot eliminate him in revenge, reconcile we must.

In these great times, in times like these, when we imagine ourselves as righteous, I hope we might look to the past to speak to the present and find reconciliation the ethical answer to the wrongdoer; because this concept enables us to retain agency and political judgment in a common world of contradicting, and quite possibly *violent*, positions.

“Where one can no longer love,
there one should pass by.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

The work is reflected in the letters—or is it rather the reverse?

—Martin Heidegger to Hannah Arendt, Letter 98, from 29 September 1967

Dora García has been interested in changing perceptions regarding the legitimacy, marginality, and radicality of ideas for a long time, typically regarding thought on the political left and its cultural articulation. She has examined the moral condemnation of the American comedian Lenny Bruce in the 1960s, explored the controversial reception of the anti-psychiatry movement in Italy and France, and made work related to the gay filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith and the avant-garde author Antonin Artaud, among other intellectual figures—usually male artists and writers—such as Julio Cortázar, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka. A consistent element of García's practice is the reading, re-reading, and re-circulation of their texts. Sometimes literary characters are reincarnated in this process, such as Charles Filch from *The Beggar's Opera* by Bertolt Brecht or Herman Melville's Bartleby. As characters are lifted out of the works, and thereby liberated from their respective cultural epochs and geographies, they are reanimated by García into the real, contemporary world either by hired actors or, in some cases, amateurs whose semi-scripted performances or public recitals of excerpted texts act back on the original work, the staging of the piece, our worldly encounters, and their unexpected relays. By initiating these situations that intertwine culture, history, participation, and responsibility, her work addresses the question of the separation of art and life; and, more often than not, the experience of engaging with her work puts the viability of this distinction strongly into question. How does the imagined segregation between art and life, when read and re-read through the intellectual, artistic, literary—namely, *cultural*—heritage of these adopted and augmented protagonists, provoke a rethinking of this separation and its consequences? García's practice inhabits this question in various ways, inviting both viewers and participants to join her in reimagining the culturally inflected terms and conditions of the art-life divide.

In this context, her recent focus on the controversial legacy of Martin Heidegger and his racist convictions comes as a somewhat unusual choice. First initiated in 2016 as part of the group exhibition *Performing Grounds: Performance as Situation, Installation, and Sculptural Intervention* at the Freiburg contemporary art gallery E-WERK, the project *On Reconciliation* unfolded in the wake of controversy

following the first publication of Heidegger's so-called *Black Notebooks* in the spring of 2014.¹ Undeniably underscoring the philosopher's anti-Semitism and Nazism, these notebooks created a formidable crisis of identity for the renowned philosophy department of the University of Freiburg, where Heidegger taught from 1928 until 1946, when he was dismissed by the Denazification Committee (he also lectured there again after he was made an emeritus professor from 1951 until 1976); many among the community of European philosophers and theorists were similarly scandalized by the publication.² Now that a number shocking passages exposed the extent and duration of his views, what would remain of his legacy as a philosopher? Was his philosophy, in its essence, fascist, or was it at least in part a fascist intellectual project? How should these racist statements be read with respect to his philosophical oeuvre? And, is it not precisely the separation between Heidegger's biography and his philosophy that must be assumed to even consider preserving, or endorsing, his philosophical legacy after discovering the racism scattered throughout the *Black Notebooks*?

In this book, García's search for clues about how to respond to Heidegger's legacy is based on a different but nevertheless decisive blurring of life and work: the centerpiece of *On Reconciliation|Über Versöhnung* is a selection of private letters exchanged by Heidegger and Hannah Arendt between 1925 to 1975. As is now well known, the first of these letters was written when Arendt, twenty years his junior, was Heidegger's student and their love affair had just commenced; their resulting friendship and intellectual camaraderie, which lasted until Arendt's death, has been written about extensively as "the love of a century," and even as a paradigmatic "love story in Germany."³ All of the existing letters in the archive of German literature have been published in an edited volume, and translations in many other languages exist. The selection in this book results from García's readings and discussions with her collaborators during the *Performing Grounds* exhibition at E-WERK. They are momentary glimpses into the shifting emotional and intellectual terrain of Arendt and Heidegger's relationship, expressing both personal incidents as well as their respective philosophical concerns, conceits, and reflections.

1 Edited by Peter Tawny and published in Frankfurt by Klostermann, the separate volumes of the so-called *Black Notebooks* include *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, *Gesamtausgabe* 94 (2014); *Überlegungen VII–XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, *Gesamtausgabe* 95 (2014); *Überlegungen XII–XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, *Gesamtausgabe* 96 (2014); *Anmerkungen I–V (Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948)*, *Gesamtausgabe* 97 (2015); and, *Anmerkungen VI–IX, Gesamtausgabe* 98 (not yet published).

2 See Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas, eds., *Reading Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1931–1941* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016).

3 See Ludger Lütkehaus, *Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger: Eine Liebe in Deutschland* (Marburg: Basiliaken-Press, 1999); Tatjana Noemi Trömmel, *Wille und Passion: Der Liebesbegriff bei Heidegger und Arendt* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013); and, Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

Thus, it is less Heidegger's official philosophy than these private epistles—predominantly letters written by Heidegger have survived, contrary to the ratio of reproductions selected for this book, which emphasize Arendt's voice—that provide a point of departure for the subsequent discussions of a series of difficult subjects: the role of ethics in intellectual production, the relationship between private and political judgment, and the inheritance of toxic masculinity as the legacy of a major twentieth-century philosopher—as well as the recent discovery that Heidegger's racist convictions continued long after the end of the Second World War. The conceptual background for García's project is Arendt's notion of *reconciliation* as an act of political judgment, which, unlike concepts of revenge or forgiveness, allows for a response and relationship to perpetrators that nonetheless still fosters a political project of building and preserving a common world. In García's view, Arendt not only formulated the concept of reconciliation to make the world bearable following the atrocities of the Second World War, but also to rationalize her unconditional loyalty to Heidegger, founded in youthful love, and her lifelong devotion to his philosophical oeuvre.⁴ The concept of reconciliation is thus situated between the personal and political; Heidegger was a committed, active member of the Nazi party until the end of the war, yet he remained one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, while Arendt was a German Jew who fled Europe to escape the Holocaust, and later became an acclaimed social, historical, and political theorist.⁵

Produced as a bilingual publication, *On Reconciliation|Über Versöhnung* includes contributions assembled around the facsimile reproductions of nine of the letters by Arendt and Heidegger, printed with permission from the heirs of the authors, as well as the German publishing house Vittorio Klostermann and the German Literature Archive in Marbach. These central pages are flanked on both sides by the transcriptions of the letters—in German and English translations, respectively—and are the core reference material that is read, cited, and discussed in the essays written by García's interlocutors. It has always been the artist's explicit wish to engage with the letters from

4 Cf. Hannah Arendt to Erwin Loewenson, 23 January 1928. German Literary Archive Marbach, A: Arendt 76.956/2: "Ob ich zur Freundschaft fähig bin, weiß ich nicht. [...] Aber fähig bin ich dessen, was Rahel Varnhagen einmal die 'suchende Treue' nannte." ["Whether I am capable of friendship I don't know. [...] [B]ut I am capable of something which Rahel Varnhagen once called a 'searching fidelity.'" (our translation).] Quoted in Tatjana Noemi Trömmel, *Wille und Passion*, 26, fn. 37.

5 On Heidegger's actions as a member of the Nazi party, see the editor's introduction in Martin Heidegger, *Nature State History, 1933–1934*, ed. and trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4–6; the editors here make explicit reference to Heidegger's lecture course "On the Essence of Truth," which explicitly calls for the "total annihilation" of Germany's "internal enemies." On these remarks, as well as Heidegger's active commitment to both Nazism and Hitlerism, see also Peter E. Gordon, "Heidegger in Purgatory," in the same volume, especially 87–9. On the postwar reception and reputation of Heidegger, see also Lutz Hachmeister, *Heidegger's Testament: Der Philosoph, der Spiegel und die SS* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2014).

a “human” rather than a scholarly perspective, and this is reflected in the first contribution: an edited conversation between García and her two close collaborators, Simon Asencio and Adriano Wilfert Jensen, about their experience of reading their parts, both in private study and publicly in various performative situations. This piece is followed by four essays: first, Mark J. Thomas mindfully elaborates why a philosopher who has subscribed to a fascist ideology inherently contradicts the concept of a reliable, serious teacher and intellectual authority. Second, Yuliya A. Tsutserova offers a philosophical meditation on the notions of thinking, being, and event, as expressed in Heidegger and Arendt’s epistolary exchange, as her only recourse to achieving a better understanding of their astounding relation. Third, Rebecka Katz Thor ultimately refutes Arendt’s reconciliation with Heidegger and unpacks Arendt’s notion of reconciliation as politically related to her concept of the *amor mundi*, or, the love of the world, in the context of her witnessing of the Eichmann trial in the early 1960s. Fourth, Nikola Mirković, by focusing on Arendt’s disclosing to Heidegger the reason for her not dedicating *The Human Condition* to him, makes a strong argument for Arendt’s differentiated attitude towards him—an attitude of personal friendship nevertheless defined by irreconcilable ethical and political boundaries. These texts provide no easy answers, but they do demonstrate the significance of Arendt’s claim, stated in her televised interview with the German journalist Günter Gaus, that there can be no act of thought without attendant personal experience.⁶

*

As the publishers of this book, we would like to add a few remarks regarding what we believe to be the contemporaneity of the publication, as Heidegger’s views and Arendt’s response to them certainly resonate uncannily with a number of present-day issues. During the two years while we were working on this book, there were many occasions when current events underlined the impetus and broader urgency of this collaboration—events that even felt radical in their forceful assertion of the politics of private life, were frequently morally repugnant, and often politically disquieting, if not extremely disturbing. A selective list would include, among many other relevant issues, the election of America’s current president and the attendant marches and rallies of white supremacists celebrating in the U.S.; the electoral success of the far-right AfD party and their subsequent entry into German parliament; and, the brutality of the Spanish federal police against voters during the Catalan independence referendum. Does the unlikely friendship of Arendt and Heidegger harbor or suggest any meaningful strategies

6 Hannah Arendt “Zur Person,” TV interview with Günter Gaus (1964), [youtube.com/watch?v=J9SyTEUi6Kw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9SyTEUi6Kw).

for facing a world in which repressive, far-right, and explicitly fascist politics are increasingly becoming mainstream and gaining momentum? What to make of her lenient treatment of him now—in these times of a new fascist threat?

Given that these letters also document an extramarital affair between an eighteen-year-old student and a thirty-five-year-old university professor, and then a decades-long intimate friendship between a man and a woman, our reading of this correspondence also resonated with many political concerns about misogyny raised by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. As Claire Dederer asks in her recent article, “What Do We Do With the Art of Monstrous Men,”

They did or said something awful, and made something great. The awful thing disrupts the great work; we can’t watch or listen to or read the great work without remembering the awful thing. Flooded with knowledge of the maker’s monstrousness, we turn away, overcome by disgust. Or... we don’t. We continue watching, separating or trying to separate the artist from the art. Either way: disruption. They are monster geniuses, and I don’t know what to do about them. [...] Ought we try to separate the art from the artist, the maker from the made? [...] Or do we believe genius gets special dispensation, a behavioral hall pass? [...] And how does our answer change from situation to situation? [...] Or are we taking in the spectacle of our own lost innocence?⁷

While their personal relationship was, for Arendt, reconciled, there remains a rather disturbing sense of the power dynamics, opportunism, and careerism that many scholars have discussed in other important publications.⁸

These are also anxious times with respect to the exhibition of work that is, or could be understood, as offensive to survivors or communities who have experienced traumatic violence. For various different and often incomparable reasons, “difficult” art works are removed from view, or their removal or demolition is demanded, as with Dana Schutz’s painting “Open Casket” at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, or the 1938 painting “Thérèse Dreaming” by Balthus at the MET, both of which recently created political controversies in New

7 Claire Dederer, “What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men,” *The Paris Review*, 20 November 2017, [the-parisreview.org/blog/2017/11/20/art-monstrous-men](https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/11/20/art-monstrous-men).

8 See Ludger Lütkehaus, *Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger: Eine Liebe in Deutschland*; Bernd Neumann, *Hannah Arendt, Georg Blücher: Ein deutsch-jüdisches Gespräch* (Berlin: Rohwohlt, 1998); and Elisabeth Young-Brühl, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982) and *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006). Young-Brühl’s writing is especially noteworthy in refuting the interpretations of Arendt’s alleged subordination to Heidegger as narrated by Elzbieta Ettinger in her controversial duography *Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

York. Similarly, the debates related to the exhibition of work by British sculptor and sexually abusive father Eric Gill (1882–1940), and the temporary removal of the erotic painting “Hylas and the Nymphs” (1896) by John William Waterhouse at the Manchester Art Gallery (as part of a performance by artist Sonya Boyce), demonstrate the precarity of the art-life divide in contexts where the work of art under consideration is understood as a product of violence.⁹ While it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge the changing bandwidth of both personal and cultural responsibility, struggles for social justice are often accompanied by the no less fraught challenge of preventing further harm without creating new conditions of political repression. Thus, when demands for justice make the already prevalent attitude of institutional caution regarding the exhibition of works especially acute and politically sensitive, it is too often the voices of marginalized artists and curators that are silenced by forms of censorship, particularly under far-right and authoritarian regimes. Because the adjudication of cultural and political claims in these institutions always occurs in the context of existing, unequal, and often extremely problematic matrices of power, the call for censorship can easily become a precedent for silencing urgently needed and frequently marginalized voices, especially as the political right cynically looks for ways to appropriate the discourse of so-called “political correctness” under a banner of righteous indignation. To appreciate the brazenness of this appropriation, one only needs to recall that Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State under U.S. President George W. Bush, legitimized the invasion of Afghanistan by claiming that the military campaign was motivated by an emancipatory, feminist objective.

Still, there is a sense in which the culture wars of the twentieth century have become a persistent global reality, along with reality television and cultural production more broadly. And, as in more deadly wars, we are all asked to take sides, which involves parsing our cultural and intellectual excitements with the lives of their producers, who are increasingly revealed as extremely problematic—even criminal—figures. Richard Brody, a film critic writing for *The New Yorker*, makes an important remark about cultural complicity in his recent article “Watching Myself Watch Woody Allen Films”:

Of course, the recognition of evil feelings and impulses isn't the sole dominion of criminals, and guilt isn't solely the torment of gross offenders; the virtuous are all the more likely to feel guilt on the basis of ordinary personal failings, the inherent tensions

9 Rachel Cooke, “Eric Gill: Can We Separate the Artist from the Abuser?” *The Guardian*, 9 April 2017, theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/apr/09/eric-gill-the-body-ditchling-exhibition-rachel-cooke; Sonya Boyce, “Our Removal of Waterhouse’s Naked Nymphs Painting Was Art in Action,” *The Guardian*, 6 February 2018, theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/06/takedown-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-art-action-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce.

and conflicts of even constructive family relationships, romances, and friendships, ordinary compromises at work, a sense of responsibility for mere day-to-day passivity, willed indifference, self-delusion. An artist who can illuminate those powerful, ubiquitous, destructive, morally complex feelings and dramatize them in a range of public and private contexts, from professional to artistic to domestic, is one whose work is worth experiencing. It’s a horrible paradox that the modern filmmaker who explores those emotions most relentlessly, most painfully, and most compellingly is one who is accused of doing things that would give him good reason to feel them.¹⁰

Whether or not to throw cultural, aesthetic, or intellectual production-babies out with the morally inexcusable personal-bathwater seems, now more than ever, a matter of knowing the levels of toxicity in the bathtub—yet these aren’t always well known or well understood in a culture that is both obsessed with spectacular scandals and that simultaneously longs for and readily buys into the false promise of purism.¹¹ Moreover, and more disturbingly, the appropriation of the discourse of “political correctness” becomes increasingly fraught as the ascendancy of the political right leads to new attacks on what it deems *degenerate* art, culture, and ideation.¹²

Within this contemporary political context, we still believe that Heidegger’s officially published work, as well as his various correspondences, including the letters with Arendt, can no longer be read or understood in the same way following the publication of *Considerations*—those volumes of the *Black Notebooks* from the 1930s and 40s—in 2014. To situate the broader reception of these notebooks, several philosophical positions that respond directly to Heidegger’s philosophy and his Nazism are worth considering here—namely, those of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Jean-Luc Nancy.

Notably, it was well before these anti-Semitic notebooks surfaced that Deleuze and Guattari made Heidegger *the* conceptual persona of *shame* in *What Is Philosophy?* Their observations are neither compromised by the *Black Notebooks*’ publication nor are they less compelling as a result: “The Heidegger affair has complicated matters: a great philosopher actually had to be reterritorialized on Nazism for the

10 Richard Brody, “Watching Myself Watch Woody Allen Films,” *The New Yorker*, 1 December 2017, newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/watching-myself-watch-woody-allen-films.

11 Regarding the literal toxicity levels of soap, see Alexis Shotwell’s introductory chapter, “Complexity and Complicity,” in her book *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 3–6.

12 As just one example, Fox News claimed that Kendrick Lamar, and rap music in general, was responsible for more Black Death than racism against Black African Americans; Lamar later sampled these accusations, made by Fox host Geraldo Rivera, on his Pulitzer Prize-winning album *DAMN*. For a discussion of Black Death in America, see Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

strangest commentaries to meet up, something calling his philosophy into question, sometimes absolving it through such complicated and convoluted arguments that we are still in the dark.”¹³ They continue: “It is not always easy to be Heideggerian. It would be easier to understand a great painter or musician falling into shame in this way (but, precisely, they did not). It had to be a philosopher, as if shame had to enter into philosophy itself.”¹⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, shame enters philosophy with Heidegger, but the horrors of the Second World War also enter into and transform the experience of being human. Referencing Primo Levi, they note: “But, [Levi] says, what Nazism and the camps inspire in us is much more or much less: ‘the shame of being a man’ (because even the survivors had to collude, to compromise themselves). It is not only our States, but each of us, every democrat, who finds him or herself not responsible for Nazism but sullied by it.”¹⁵ Even more importantly, and with decisive relevance for contemporary European politics, they add:

Nor is it only in the extreme situations described by Primo Levi that we experience the shame of being human. We also experience it in insignificant conditions, before the meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies, before the propagation of these modes of existence and of thought-for-market, and before the values, ideals, and opinions of our time. The ignominy of the possibilities of life that we are offered appears from within. We do not feel ourselves outside of our time but continue to undergo shameful compromises with it. This feeling of shame is one of philosophy’s most powerful motifs.¹⁶

Even as a philosophical motif, how does this shame—both human shame and Heidegger’s shame—intensify, transform, and thereby reorient philosophical thought in the wake of the *Black Notebooks*?

Fundamentally, the publication of these notebooks devastated every philosophical discussion of Heidegger. Because of this transformation, but especially because Arendt herself *knew nothing of these notebooks*, it is perhaps worth remembering, while reading this publication, the extent of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism and how it could further complicate the concept of reconciliation, as well as the separation between thought and life, or between philosophy and politics—both in the context of personal relationships and public action. Would Arendt have condemned Heidegger along with Eichmann if she had read the notebooks? We have struggled with this question as we worked on the

13 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 108.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*, 107.

16 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 107–8.

book and read the contributions, letters, and attendant scholarship, but we turned to Jean-Luc Nancy—whose own work developed from a profound engagement with and transformation of Heidegger’s thought—as the Virgil guiding our descent into the notebooks and their consequences. As Jeff Fort explains in his Translator’s Introduction to Nancy’s *The Banality of Heidegger*,

Heidegger remains an important philosophical resource. And that, like it or not, he remains, indeed, one of the most important thinkers of our age. Like it or not, this problematic figure will forever hold a prominent place in the landscape of twentieth-century European philosophy—neither, certainly, as the only legitimate voice in that landscape (as Heidegger himself seemed at times to believe) nor as an unfortunate perversion of a merely clownish sideshow (although even appreciative readers might see aspects of this). The problem, of course, is that he also was, in fact, a former Nazi and, we now know, a thinker who put the clichés of anti-Semitism to work within his thought.¹⁷

In our reading, these remarks resonate with García’s project and its significance today. Fort goes on to emphasize that Heidegger “was *both* an erstwhile Nazi given to anti-Semitic ‘thinking’ and an incisive philosopher whose radical question was driven by the urgencies of his epoch. Heidegger is both indefensible and not simply dismissable. [...] To defend or to dismiss, then, would both quite gravely miss the point.”¹⁸ García’s work and the book that follows is keyed to inhabiting and thinking this interstice, yet we are compelled to follow through with a brief reading of Nancy’s own interpretation, and that is because he seems, at least to us, the living philosopher closest to Heidegger’s own project, and thus suggests—despite their radically different relationships to Heidegger *as a man*—how Arendt might have been affected by the *Black Notebooks* had she lived to witness their publication.

According to Nancy’s reading, for Heidegger, “the Jewish people belongs in an essential way to the process of the devastation of the world. It is the most identifiable agent of this devastation in that it presents a figure, a form or a type, a Gestalt—the figure of the aptitude for calculation, of traffic, and of shrewdness.”¹⁹ Nancy continues, quoting Heidegger:

The figure of the Jew configures the very type of a devastating necessity: the gigantic, calculation, and a rationality that is

17 Jeff Fort, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Banality of Heidegger*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), xiv.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Nancy, *The Banality of Heidegger*, 20.

busy de-differentiating the world and properly dislodging it: withdrawing from it every kind of ground and soil. *Bodenlosigkeit*—groundlessness, lack of soil—is a distinctive trait of “Jewry.” Groundlessness consists of—or leads to—“being bound to nothing, making everything servicable for itself (Jewry).” Thus no real “victory of history over the historyless” can come about until “groundlessness excludes itself” (*sich selbst ausschließt*)—one can note the euphemistic character of the term, which however can only designate a destruction, an elimination.²⁰

Is there a possibility for reconciliation with these convictions? Where do we situate it as a political concept in this landscape of hatred?

Writing further that Heidegger’s anti-Semitism is drawn “from the most banal, vulgar, trivial, and nasty discourse that had long been scattered throughout Europe and that had been propped up for some thirty years by the miserable publication *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,”²¹ Nancy explains that “Heidegger ties together the deconstruction (*Abbau*) of metaphysical ontology—a grand philosophical gesture that extends and pushes further the premises of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Husserl—and the destruction (*Zerstörung*) of that which and of those who seem to him precisely to be destroying the world and history.”²² As others have written as well, maybe the most striking realization here is to see Heidegger’s soliloquy in the *Black Notebooks* so intensely occupied with a systematic cultural transformation, a “new inception of history” based on the megalomaniac understanding of “what is at stake on *his* terms.”²³

Despite Heidegger’s shocking and often reckless statements—as well as those outside of the *Black Notebooks*—that went as far as publicly exhorting a “total annihilation,” he somehow managed to convince his followers after the war that his professional association with the Nazi regime was merely temporary and steeped in naïveté.²⁴ However, given the extraordinary calibre of his intellect, such ignorance and dilettantism seem especially difficult to believe. As Nancy remarks, “The thinker who was so adept at tracing provenances, whether those of the Greek language or those of modern (technical, democratic,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 23.

²² Ibid., 25.

²³ Gregory Fried, “The King Is Dead: Martin Heidegger After the *Black Notebooks*,” in *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks 1931–1941*, eds. Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016), 51.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 53, where Fried gives the example of Heidegger lecturing to undergraduate students in 1933 about the threat of an “enemy [who] can have attached itself to the innermost roots of the *Dasein* of a people and can set itself against this people’s own essence and act against it,” and later imploring that “[i]t is often more difficult and wearisome to catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor no illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensify a constant readiness and to prepare the attack, looking far ahead with the goal of total annihilation.” (Emphasis our own.)

calculating) devastation, did not ask himself where anti-Semitism could have come from.”²⁵ Instead, Heidegger “recognizes a higher truth in anti-Semitism” whose scheme “merits the support of the most widespread, heinous, and narrow-minded vulgarity because this vulgarity says in its way the truth of Jewish-being, of *Judentum*, the perfectly identifiable entity and identity of the precipitation of the world into vulgarity, precisely and in every sense of the word.”²⁶ Thus, Heidegger repudiates, at the heart of the West, “a foreign body that threatens it precisely because it disperses, dissolves, or conceals its ‘self.’ Dispersion, dissolution, or concealment of self—it is ultimately to these that Jewish specificity is reduced.”²⁷ Or, as Nancy says later, “Heidegger was not only anti-Semitic: he attempted to think to its final extremity a deep historico-destinal necessity of anti-Semitism. That is why, in the end, the displacement of ‘biological’ racism into a metaphysics of the races perhaps does not displace much at all.”²⁸ Indeed, since the publication of the *Black Notebooks* there can no longer be much doubt about the clarity of Heidegger’s racist visions—a “new reality” as he called it, “pushing our thinking into the right path and impact”; he was inebriated by the fascist dream of a national-socialist awakening.²⁹ Yet, according to Nancy, in the end and in spite of all this—and, we should add, in relation to Arendt and her concept of reconciliation—

there is no intention here of refuting Heidegger. Quite the contrary: by designating clearly the way in which he let himself be carried away and stupefied in the worst of heinous banalities, to the point of the intolerable, one can shed more light on what he himself should have seen and what in any case he allows us to discern. Heidegger was able to know what kind of trap is contained within the rage for the initial or for the *archi*-. He ought to have known it. His thought implied it. But in the violence of the paradigm of the initial, the old hatred of self, the old rancor of the West against itself persisted in occluding this knowledge.³⁰

Above all, re-reading Heidegger and Arendt’s correspondence in our contemporary political climate provides crucial ethical reminders for the ongoing relevance of critical practices of responsibility and memory that allow for a better understanding of our own situatedness within the contingent histories that condition the possibility of our actions. “How was it possible,” asks Nancy, “that a thinking that felt so intensely

²⁵ Nancy, *The Banality of Heidegger*, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁹ Alfred J. Noll, “Heidegger vor Gericht!” *Die Zeit*, 28 Dezember 2015, zeit.de/2015/52/martin-heidegger-nsdap-vergangenheit (our translation).

³⁰ Nancy, *The Banality of Heidegger*, 43.

24 the heaviness of a morbid state of civilization could, in the face of the anguish, find nothing but to add to this anguish the imprecations forged by an age-old false or bad conscience? This question is not only aimed at Heidegger: it addresses itself to us, to all of us, to every exercise of thought, today no less than before.”³¹ How, then, does it address itself to Hannah Arendt, and what is her reply?

Again, because Arendt did not know about the statements contained in the *Black Notebooks*, any consideration of her relationship with Heidegger, and her reconciliation with him after the war, requires cautious meditation. And maybe, for us, the question that actually matters most in this context is not how she reconciled with him, but instead: *how should we reconcile with her?* How are we to re-read Arendt’s own political theory when the notably segregated subjectivity that enables her separation between life and thought, and which allows her to construct a philosophical firewall between the personal and the political, also exempts her own mentor from the moral scrutiny she applied to Eichmann, thereby permitting the possibility of reconciliation?³² In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Friedrich Nietzsche had already summarized this problem as a revelation: “It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy up till now has consisted of—namely, the confession of its originator, and a species of involuntary and unconscious autobiography; and moreover that the moral (or immoral) purpose in every philosophy has constituted the true vital germ out of which the entire plant has always grown.”³³ It is precisely this acute, disquieting sense that even exceptional philosophical oeuvres might stem from the banality of all-too-human prejudices—and what to make of this realization *culturally*—that makes García’s artistic practice so crucial today.

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31 Ibid., 58.

32 See especially Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978).

33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 13.

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Reconciliation as Action: A Discussion On the Origin, the Possibility, and the Need for a Public Reading of the Correspondence Between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger

DORA GARCIA, SIMON ASECIO, AND ADRIANO WILFERT JENSEN

DORA GARCIA A little introduction.

When I started working on the correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, it was in the context of a situation in Freiburg, where, after the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, it was no longer cool to study Heidegger, who was now clearly and beyond any possible apology a Nazi.¹ The University of Freiburg wanted to avoid mentioning him as much as possible, and the city threatened to erase his name from a street named in his honor. The problem was that 90 percent of foreign students were coming to Freiburg because of Heidegger, which begged me to ask: Can the work of philosophers (and poets and artists) be independent from the political opinions of its author? Is it possible to be one of the greatest philosophers of all time while at the same time a morally questionable human being? And finally, is the philosophy of Martin Heidegger representative of his Nazism?

I thought I would explore these questions by researching Heidegger's relationship with Arendt, since this is one of the most puzzling relationships ever and extensively documented in their correspondence. It is here that I encountered the concept of *reconciliation*, coined by Arendt, which now looks as though it was specifically tailored to defend, or to understand,

her relationship with Heidegger. It was then that I proposed to the two of you a performative re-imagining of this fascinating letter exchange.

What did you think of the letters, how did you go about working with them?

ADRIANO WILFERT JENSEN Arendt and Heidegger corresponded over so many years, it seems there was so much that they both knew that they didn't need to mention in their letters. To prepare for the performance, we read the letters many times, and in public, probably without knowing many of the things they were hinting at or actually talking about.

SIMON ASECIO It was interesting that every reading was a new attempt at understanding this relationship and all the forms and situations that this love went through. There is something that feels very deep, and at the same time unreachable, in these letters, no matter how many times we've "rehearsed" them.

DG Certain concepts seem to be very important in this relationship, especially on the part of Arendt, who is doubtlessly the one who decided upon the duration of the relationship. One is *reconciliation*, while others are gratefulness, the impossibility of forgetting, and "mission." She explains the

concept of *reconciliation* in her diary: "Reconciliation with the mission we have received is only possible on the basis of gratefulness for what we have been given. Reconciliation with the other is a real event, because it does not pretend to exonerate the other, it does not pretend the load has disappeared. [...] The one who reconciles accepts willingly to share on her shoulders the weight the other will carry. This means equality is re-established, contrary to pardon, which establishes inequality."² And one of the most revealing sentences in her letters around that time, when Heidegger goes to her hotel to visit her, is...

AWJ "This evening and this morning are the confirmation of an entire life." →p.103

DG "When the waiter spoke your name (I had not actually expected you, had not received the letter, after all), it was as if time suddenly stood still. Then all at once I became aware of something I would not have confessed before, neither to myself nor to you nor to anyone—how, after Friedrich had given me the address, the power of the impulse had mercifully saved me from committing the only really inexcusable act of infidelity and forfeiting my life."³ Interestingly, →p.103 she speaks of *infidelity*.

SA Yes, but the question is: towards whom?

DG Well, I think towards him. She considers herself bound to him, bound by gratefulness.

Let me quote something else, because this concept appears throughout her writing. In *Men in Dark Times*, when speaking of Waldemar Gurian, she says: "At any event, faithfulness to his friends, to everybody he had ever known, to everything he had ever liked, became so much the dominant note on which his life was tuned that one is tempted to say that *the crime most alien to him was the crime of oblivion, perhaps one of the cardinal crimes in human relationships*."⁴

SA In one of her letters, dated 22 April 1928, she writes: "I always give so much as anyone wants from me, and the path itself is nothing but the commitment our love makes me responsible for."⁵ Perhaps →p.95 love transcended the relationship itself?

DG I found the relationship, from his point of view, to be incredibly conventional. A typical, ordinary love affair of the teacher/student type, secret, and petty. And when he was about to publish his opus magnum, *Being and Time*, he thought it would be inconvenient to continue the relationship, so he sent her away, but continued to be irritated and anxious about her new relationships.⁶ It really sounded to me like an old tale. What's truly extraordinary is what happens in 1950.

SA When they meet again?

DG Yes, exactly. Because by then the situation is radically different: she is respected, loved, admired—and he is a pariah.

SA But still, she commits to him, defends him.

DG She has all the reason to detest him, and yet she is faithful; she does not forget, she reconciles. Of course, now it is no longer a love affair anymore, not in the conventional sense.

SA But aren't they romantically involved again in the 1950s?

DG I don't think so. At this point it's a friendship, and his wife is part of it, officially at least.

AWJ "I came without knowing what your wife expected of me."⁷ →p.103 What was this about?

DG Heidegger seemed desperate to get the two of them, Elfride and Hannah, on good terms.⁸

AWJ Yes.

DG What's even more disconcerting here is that Hannah is by no means the only extramarital affair of Heidegger's, who had many, many romances—but it was somehow the only one that felt threatening to Elfride.

AWJ "I was and am shaken by the honesty and urgency of the reproach. But I said 'maybe' out of a sudden feeling of solidarity with her, and out of a sudden surge of sympathy. Objectively, I should add that I did not, of course, remain silent just as a matter of discretion, but also as a matter of pride. But also as a matter of love for you—not to make anything more

difficult than it must be."⁹ →p.103–4 It feels like another classic scenario.

DG In the 1950 encounter with his wife, as Arendt tells the story to her husband, she seems to find a certain humor in seeing her former lover in such an awkward position. So, Arendt is capable of masterfully re-defining the relationship, because the relationship was undoubtedly very important to her, and she went through all sorts of hell to defend Heidegger.

SA I was reading somewhere that Arendt's first dissertation in 1929 was *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* [On the Concept of Love in the Thought of Saint Augustine: An Attempt at a Philosophical Interpretation]. She was preoccupied with an ethic of love, especially since she describes *reconciliation* as the only possible political form of dealing with a wrong.

AWJ Would it make sense to think this through the later Eichmann trial?¹⁰ Because by then she had also become quite the outcast.

DG She explicitly says that reconciliation is *not* possible with a figure like Eichmann, that it is not possible to live in a world where Eichmann is alive.¹¹ What irritated people was not this; it was that she pointed to the Jewish institutions and their role in the gathering and rounding up of Jews before their deportation to concentration camps, and the fact that she found it inadequate to judge Eichmann in Israel. To Arendt, he should have been put on trial in Germany. That, and her

refusal to portray Eichmann as a monster. This debate is still alive today. I remember when people criticized *Der Untergang* because Bruno Ganz made Hitler look “human.” This is just part of the utter hypocrisy of the world; it’s nice to paint the “officially bad” ones as monsters to avoid taking responsibility for them. I modestly believe this righteous hypocrisy is also at play in the banning of Heidegger from Freiburg.

SA It’s easier to make him an out-cast; making him human asks us to understand how humans could do that.

AWJ If evil is banal then everyone has responsibilities?

DG Everyone has responsibilities in any case. One thing that fascinates me, and that comes forward much better in the readings of the letters you do, is the evolution of their relationship. From the classic, unequal student-professor relationship, to the first time she seems to demand “justice” from him, in Letters 44 and 45, to a few years later when she demands an explanation for his anti-Semitism. Then the war happens—she becomes a quasi-hero and he becomes a pariah until the French rescue him. The funny thing is, even then, he still treats her with condescension. When she sends him a book, he says: “We thank you for your book which I won’t be able to read due to my lack of English language skills. Elfride will be interested.”¹² So, what we have here is not only an anti-Semite and a member of

the Nazi party, but also a prototypical sexist mansplainer.

AWJ And out of principle she will not confront him?

SA But also out of a political principle of love? And because of the principle of reconciliation?

DG Because he is Heidegger, her teacher, the man who taught her how to think. And that is true. Then comes the last part of the book, the saddest part, when her husband dies, in Letter 127:

Between two people, sometimes, how rarely, a world grows. It is then one’s only homeland we were willing to recognise. This tiny microworld where you can always escape from the world, and which disintegrates when the other has gone away. I go now and I am quite calm and think: *away*.¹³ →p.111

Of course, this is meant for her husband, but I cannot help thinking that it’s also meant for Heidegger, not only because of the love affair, but because they had built such a world together and she refuses to abandon it. She says somewhere of Heidegger, I can’t find the quote, but I’m sure of it: a *se non è vero, è ben trovato*: “We met in the German language.”

SA But isn’t she actually ready to let it go (“quite calm and think: *away*”)?

DG Yes, the world she shared with her husband, who has now died, is “*away*.” There is nothing she can do about

that, but she can do something to preserve the world with Heidegger—by refusing to abandon it. So it’s like “the girl from abroad”—as she →p.103 names herself facing Elfride¹⁴—who seems to be stressing her Jewish descent, had decided to find home, homeland, in the German language that was represented, better than anyone, by Heidegger.¹⁵

AWJ Yes, she holds that highly. In the 1964 TV interview with Günter Gaus, in which you alluded to above regarding guilt and Eichmann, she also talks about the role of the mother tongue.¹⁶

DG In the letters, she doesn’t often refer to Heidegger’s behavior during the pre-war, war, and post-war periods. But she does refer to those periods in Letter 116, the letter of congratulations she writes for his eightieth birthday, calling it the “mistake”: “Now we all know that Heidegger, too, once succumbed to the temptation to change his residence and to ‘intervene’ in the world of human affairs—as the saying went back then. As far as the world is concerned, it was even several times less palatable to him than it had been to Plato, because the tyrant and his victims were not across the sea but in this own country.”¹⁷ And in the notes she actually then attempts to exculpate him somehow by writing: “This escapade, which is mostly called the ‘mistake’ today—after the bitterness has subsided.” And then, further down in the same paragraph, she moreover quotes a verse by Robert Gilbert:

There is no need to knock about with an ax through every door—the nation has now broken out like a bubonic sore.¹⁸

SA So the “mistake” is that a philosopher tried to “intervene”?

DG Yes, exactly. She paints it as if a philosopher is unfit for human affairs, should avoid them, to avoid making “mistakes.” Maybe this is why she has always refused to call herself a philosopher.

The problem, as many people say, is not that Heidegger made a mistake—lots of Germans made that mistake. The problem is that, being a thinker of his stature, he never, ever, even remotely apologized.¹⁹

AWJ It feels like our task is to reconcile with her reconciliation with him.

DG I think in these letters there is something that could allow us to reconcile with Heidegger’s political views and avoid shunning his work, permitting study and consideration today.

SA It feels that way with Heidegger when reading the Letter 62 for example. That there is a disconnect between his groundbreaking work and his behavior.

DG In that letter, he writes: “Hannah, reconciliation is rich, but apparently we must wait for a turning point, when the world changes and overcomes the spirit of revenge.”²⁰ When discussing this issue with some scholars of philosophy, they comment that to hold

Nazism, sexism, or bad faith with colleagues against Heidegger is not at all relevant to his philosophy. That would be what they call an *argumentum ad hominem*. But Heidegger was constructing precisely the type of philosophy that made it impossible to separate a man from his work.

AWJ In *Men in Dark Times*, Arendt writes: “We can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it.”²¹ So, at least by 1968, she’s very clear that not only must we reconcile with Heidegger’s “mistake” (unless we consider his acts “Radical Evil”), but she must also reconcile with her own love and loyalty.

DG I think she knew what Heidegger had done at the beginning of the Nazi regime, which is: nothing, other than become a member of the NSDAP (which he did not have to), and act accordingly. During the time when he was rector of Freiburg University, I think it was a very brief year—1933 to 1934—he praised Hitler and apparently did everything in his power to ostracize Jewish colleagues.²²

SA Was he aware of the influence of his thinking?

DG It would seem not. He was very much frustrated by it—not having the echo he thought he deserved, and certainly deserved, until the French structuralists came to visit him.

SA Apart from the books and translations that Arendt was circulating.

DG In a way, yes. Arendt seemed to be his connection to the world.

SA Throughout her entire career, she defended his thinking and made sure his work circulated.

DG Arendt took care of having his work translated into English, the French translated it into French, and this is how he could rise to the success that’s still lingering today.

AWJ So, it was pure careerism for him?

DG It’s possible. That way he lacks nothing in adjectives: Nazi, sexist, careerist. Oh, and the most important philosopher of the twentieth century as well.

SA The Heideggerian term *Alētheia* comes to mind here: “The state of not being hidden; the state of being evident.” It also means factuality, or reality.

DG An important Heideggerian word that could probably also apply to the moment when he put all his cards on the table regarding his wife and Arendt. To her husband, Blücher, Arendt said of Heidegger’s wife: “For twenty-five years now, or from the time she somehow wormed the truth about us out of him, she has clearly made his life a hell on earth. [...] And he, who always, at every opportunity, has been such a notorious liar, evidently... never... refuted that I had been the passion of his life.”²³ I think it was this honesty in personal

relations that allowed her to forgive Heidegger for his political views.

After performing the letters, do you think one can separate the man from the work?

AWJ We still haven’t met the perfect human being, so I guess we don’t have a choice?

DG Brecht was also guilty of complicity with Stalinism, even after the crimes of Stalin were widely known, but somehow Brecht is a more likable figure than Heidegger.

SA Even if artists or thinkers themselves seem like decent people, some of them were still seduced by highly questionable political figures.

AWJ Maybe we need to disassociate the person from their work to understand the work.

DG I think in our time it is hard to disassociate art and life, and vice versa. In fact, it seems more difficult than ever. Much rather, I believe that people—men, women, and all in between—are very complex, have many sides and are capable of the most sublime and the most abject, at the same time, in the same person.

AWJ In the interview with Gaus, Arendt says: “I am not moved by any ‘love’ of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life ‘loved’ any people or collective—neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love ‘only’ my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons.”²⁴ I am of the opinion that she would agree with this idea that human beings are complex. I believe that, and after reading the letters, even more so.

1 *The Black Notebooks (Schwarze Hefte)* refer to a series of black-covered notebooks handwritten by Heidegger between 1889 and 1976, of which fourteen, ranging from the years 1931 to 1941, have been published as the *Considerations II–XV*. They contain very explicit anti-Semitic content, and their publication in 2014 sent the whole Heideggerian community into turmoil, many are unable to defend the philosopher any longer.

2 Statement by Arendt from between May and June 1950, some months after her first re-encounter with Heidegger, which happened in February of that year. *Hannah Arendt, Diario filosófico, Notas y*

apéndices 1950–1973, ed. Raúl Gabás Pallás, Ursula Ludz, and Ingeborg Nordmann (Barcelona: Herder, 2011). (Quote translated into English by Dora García.)

3 Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, “Letter 48, from 9 February 1950,” in *Letters 1925–1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004), 59.

4 Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harvest, 1970), 254.

5 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 42, from 22 April 1928,” in *Letters*, 50.

6 *Sein und Zeit* was first published in 1927.

7 Arendt and Heidegger,

“Letter 48, from 9 February 1950,” in *Letters*, 59.

8 Heidegger, a Catholic, married Elfride Petri (1893–1992), a Lutheran, on 21 March 1917. They had two sons, both of whom served in the Wehrmacht during the Second World War and were taken as prisoners on the Eastern Front.

9 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 48, from 9 February 1950,” in *Letters*, 59–61.

10 *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* is a book by Hannah Arendt, originally published in 1963. Arendt reported on the trial of notorious Nazi Adolf Eichmann for *The New Yorker*.

11 Arendt’s TV interview with German journalist Günter

- Gaus, *Zur Person*, 1964: First English transcript published in Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehar (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 3–25. There are some interesting paragraphs regarding guilt here: "My husband and I said the Nazis were capable of anything. We did not believe it because militarily it was unnecessary. [...] But six months later we did believe it. We had the proof. And that was the real shock. [...] It was as if an abyss had opened. [...] Amends could be made for everything else. But not for this. This ought never to have happened." Regarding Hannah Arendt's attitude towards Eichmann, see also Rebecka Katz Thor's essay "The Limits of Reconciliation: Arendt, Eichmann, and Heidegger" in this volume, 65–74.
- 12 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 74, from 14 July 1951," in *Letters*, 105.
- 13 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 127, from 17 November 1970," in *Letters*, 173.
- 14 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 48, from 9 February 1950," in *Letters*, 59–61.
- 15 Arendt, regarding language, in "What Remains?," 14 (for reference, see also note 11): HA: I have always refused to lose my mother tongue. I have always kept a distance from French, which I speak fairly well, and English, the language I write in nowadays. GG: Do you write in English? HA: Yes. But I have always kept a distance. One's mother tongue and another language are so different. I can explain it very simply: I know a lot of German poetry by heart. The poems are always on the back of my mind. I couldn't achieve that in English. [...] It is not the German language that went crazy. There is no substitute for the mother tongue.
- 16 Ibid. See also footnote 11.
- 17 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 116, 26 September 1969," in *Letters*, 161.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us," interview with Rudolf Augstein and Georg Wolff, *Der Spiegel*, 23 September 1966, published 31 May 1976, English translation used: la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/330T/350kPEEHeideggerSpiegel.pdf. SPIEGEL: We must (we are almost done with this dreadful quoting) mention one other statement here, one that we cannot imagine that you would still subscribe to today. 'Do not let theorems and ideas be the rules of your being. The Führer himself and alone is the present and future German reality and its law.' MH: These sentences are not to be found in the rectoral address, but only in the local Freiburg student newspaper, at the beginning of the winter semester 1933–34. When I took over the rectorate, it was clear to me that I would not get through it without making compromises. Today, I would no longer write the sentences you cited. Even in 1934, I no longer said anything of the kind. *But today, and today more resolutely than ever, I would repeat the speech on the 'Self-Assertion of the German University,' though admittedly without referring to nationalism. Society has taken the place of the nation (Volk). However, the speech would be just as much of a waste of breath today as it was then.* [Publisher's note: This translation is not without its own problems as the last two sentences quoted above (and here set in italics) do not appear in the original pages of *Der Spiegel*; according to the English translator's notes in the PDF linked above, the translation was amended using Heidegger's own archival copy. For the original version of the quote as published in *Der Spiegel*, see here, p. 198: drive.google.com/open?id=1pmMZ

sUGs2p00PINGAX2RXcx
YnRvMUDR0.]

- 20 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 62, from 6 May 1950," in *Letters*, 83–5.
- 21 Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 21.
- 22 From Arendt's interview with Gaus, see note 11: HA: The problem was not what our enemies did in 1933. The real problem is what our friends did. [...] Not yet under the pressure of Nazi terror, we were ostracized. It was as if a vacuum formed around one. [...] The disloyalty of friends, to put it bluntly for once. GG: That you personally experienced? HA: Of course. If someone really became a Nazi, and wrote articles about it, he did not have to be loyal to me personally, I did not speak again to him anyhow. He did not need to contact me. As far as I was concerned, he had ceased to exist. But they were not all murderers. There were people who fell into their own trap. [...] These were people who believed in the Nazis only for a few months. They were neither murderers nor informers. People who made up ideas about Hitler.
- 23 Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger* (New York: Norton and Company, 2010), 185.
- 24 From Arendt's interview with Gaus, see note 11.

DORA GARCIA was born in Spain and studied in Amsterdam. As a young artist she moved to Brussels where she lived for sixteen years. She participated with the real-time theater in public space *The Beggar's Opera* in Münster Sculpture Projects 2007, where the character Charles Filch made his first appearance in her work. She has always been interested in anti-heroic and marginal personae as a prototype to study the social status of the artist, and in narratives of resistance and counter-culture. In this regard, García has developed works on the GDR political police, the Stasi (the film *Rooms, Conversations* from 2006), on the charismatic figure of U.S. stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce (*Just because everything is different it does not mean that anything has changed, Lenny Bruce in Sydney*, one-time performance, Sydney Biennale in 2008), and on the origins, rhizomatic associations, and consequences of anti-psychiatry (*Mad Marginal* book series since 2010; *The Deviant Majority*, film, 2010). In the last few years, she has used classical TV formats to research Germany's more recent history (*Die Klau Mich Show*, Documenta13 in 2012), frequented *Finnegans Wake* reading groups (*The Joycean Society*, film, 2013), created meeting points for voice hearers (*The Hearing Voices Café*, since 2014), and researched the crossover between performance and psychoanalysis (*The Sinthome Score*, 2013, and *Segunda Vez*, 2017). She is also a professor at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts and HEAD Geneva, and co-director of Les Laboratoires D'Aubervilliers Paris.

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MARK J. THOMAS

The recent publication of the *Black Notebooks* has reignited the debate about Heidegger's character and the relationship of his abhorrent political views to his philosophy. Of course, incriminating material about Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism has been well-known and hotly debated for years. This is nothing new. What *is* new is the explicit anti-Semitism of the *Black Notebooks* and the inclusion of this anti-Semitism within Heidegger's own philosophical reflections on technology and the history of being. In one passage, he claims that Jews have increased their power because Western metaphysics has enabled the spread of an "empty rationality and calculative ability."¹ In another passage, he attributes to "world Jewry" the world-historical task of "uprooting all beings from being."² Heidegger even denigrates the thought of his teacher, Edmund Husserl, suggesting that his philosophy was incapable of "essential decisions" because of his Jewish descent.³

Of course, the twisted ideology in these private reflections does not come as a complete surprise, considering Heidegger's political activity during the preceding period. As is well known, he joined the Nazi Party in 1933 around the time he became rector of the University of Freiburg. Although he resigned as rector the following year, he nonetheless played an important role in the *Gleichschaltung*, or "bringing into line," of the German university system in the critical early days of the Nazi regime. During his rectorship, Heidegger supported the Nazi party in speeches and articles, and he implemented anti-Jewish policies at the university. After resigning as rector, he remained a member of the Nazi party up to the end of the war. Throughout his life, Heidegger never publically apologized, nor did he repudiate his statements in support of the Nazis.⁴

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–XV* (*Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941*), ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014) (GA 96), 46.

² *Ibid.*, 243.

³ *Ibid.*, 46–7. This passage was cited by Günter Figal when he resigned as chair of the Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft in 2015.

⁴ For a summary of the established facts about Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, see Julian Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–8.

In this essay, I will not be examining the details of Heidegger's biography or the problematic passages in the *Black Notebooks* and other texts.⁵ Instead I would like to address the more general question of what is at stake in the debate. What relevance should the character and politics of philosophers have for reading their philosophy? One possible answer is "none." If the arguments and ideas of a philosopher have intrinsic merit, then it does not matter how odious the philosopher's political views might be. The philosophical ideas speak for themselves. We would not throw out a brilliant mathematical proof if we discover the mathematician is a bigot; the same would seem to apply in philosophy. Along these lines, Richard Rorty and others have sought to preserve Heidegger's thought by severing it from Heidegger the man. Anyone who dismisses Heidegger's philosophy because of his politics, they argue, is committing the *ad hominem* fallacy.⁶

The *Black Notebooks* have made Rorty's strategy of separating Heidegger's philosophy from his politics more problematic, because Heidegger himself brings the two together in the text. His anti-Semitic remarks are not isolated musings but embedded in reflections on the history of being, the end of metaphysics, and the nature of technology—all themes that appear in other writings free from explicit anti-Semitic content. In one passage Heidegger describes the Jewish people as "world-less" (*weltlos*),⁷ thereby making use of the concept of "world" that is so central to *Being and Time*.

Even if Heidegger explicitly connects his anti-Semitism and support for National Socialism to ideas from his philosophy, this by itself does not discredit those ideas. Everything hangs on the precise nature of the connections. It is possible that Heidegger's ideas have essential connections to the hateful ideology that he expresses, and that the *Black Notebooks* just make explicit what was implicit in the ideas all along. For example, it might turn out that Heidegger's account of technology and modernity is somehow rooted in his views on the historical role

5 For an overview of recent developments in the debate, see "Einleitung: Die neue Heidegger-Debatte," in *Martin Heideggers "Schwarze Hefte": Eine philosophisch-politische Debatte*, ed. Marion Heinz and Sidonie Kellerer (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 9–28.

6 Richard Rorty, "Taking Philosophy Seriously," *The New Republic*, 11 April 1988, 31–4, esp. 32–3. See also Julian Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*, 8–9.

7 Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen VII–XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)*, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014) (GA 95), 96–7.

of "world Jewry," even if he gives no indication of this in other texts. But it is also possible that the connections are not essential, and that one can find ideas like Heidegger's critique of technology convincing without needing to endorse the abhorrent views that he happens to connect with them. Of course, there is a third possibility that would combine the first two: some of the connections might be essential, while others are not.

How are we to decide among these options? Here again those who would separate Heidegger the man from his ideas have a point. The ideas should be judged on their own merits, without allowing the character of their author—or even the author's abhorrent statements using these ideas—to determine our judgment. Of course, the fact that Heidegger does make these statements gives us reason to examine the ideas even more carefully for possible connections to a twisted ideology. Nevertheless, the question of what political implications the ideas might have, as well as the ultimate validity of these ideas, can only be decided by thinking through the "things themselves."

This line of reasoning is correct as far as it goes. But there is still something deeply unsettling about the fact that a great philosopher would think such repulsive thoughts—even if it turns out that there are no essential connections between those thoughts and his philosophical ideas. I suspect that underlying this unease is a topic hovering in the background of the debate, a topic that (to my knowledge) has not been treated explicitly. This is Heidegger's authority as a philosopher. As a great philosopher, Heidegger functions implicitly as an authority for many in the tradition of continental philosophy.⁸ One senses—rightly or wrongly—that his authority is somehow damaged or undermined by his abhorrent politics. Heidegger's character and politics are therefore relevant for reading his philosophy to the extent that they jeopardize his authority.

Why has this authority not been a focus of the debate thus far? For non-philosophers, the connection to authority

8 In English-speaking philosophical circles, "continental philosophy" is the common term for the (mostly German and French) tradition of philosophy that includes phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and critical theory.

40 may seem obvious, especially when we broaden the context and consider *l'affaire Heidegger* as one more story of a discredited “authority figure” in a long line of discredited politicians, religious leaders, and corporate executives. Indeed, one can easily draw connections to wider questions about legitimate authority at a time when anti-Semitism and other hateful ideologies are again on the rise. However, the authority at stake in Heidegger’s case is not the same as the authority of a political or religious leader: it is a distinctively *philosophical* authority. And this, I suspect, is the reason why the importance of authority has been overlooked in the Heidegger debate up to now. In philosophy today, there is virtually no recognition of the role and importance of philosophical authority.

In fact, the notion of philosophical authority would seem strange, if not absurd, to most philosophers—even if there are famous examples in ancient and medieval philosophy. In its essence philosophy requires thinking through the ideas for oneself. But treating a philosopher as an authority would seem to undermine the autonomy of one’s thought. To quote Locke, those who rely on authority in philosophical matters would be “lazily enslaving their minds to the dictates and dominion of others, in doctrines which it is their duty carefully to examine, and not blindly, with an implicit faith to swallow.”⁹ However, this assumes that the attitude toward the philosophical authority must be one of blind acceptance. Though it sometimes happens that the followers of a philosopher blindly follow his every word, there are other ways of relating to philosophical authority, and these can be philosophically legitimate. In fact, philosophical authority functions in subtle and implicit ways that easily go undetected.

In this essay, I will lay the groundwork for a general account of philosophical authority with a view to the implications of this account for the Heidegger debate. Necessarily, this can only be a sketch: as I hope to show, the issue raises several complex questions about the forms, structure, and legitimacy of philosophical authority—questions that have yet to be explored. It is true that work has been done on epistemic

9 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1894), Book I, Chapter III, §23. Locke is here

referring to accepting things on trust in general. In the following section (§24) he applies this critique to philosophical authority.

41 authority in general, despite the neglect of the topic throughout the history of philosophy. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer offers a critique of the Enlightenment opposition of authority and reason; authority and tradition, he argues, are essential to our experience as finite historical beings.¹⁰ More recently, a number of analytic philosophers have begun to write on authority, trust, and the social dimensions of epistemology.¹¹ However, neither Gadamer nor those working in analytic epistemology specifically discuss philosophical authority and the unique problems associated with using authority when doing philosophy. My goal is to draw attention to these problems, especially as they relate to Heidegger. In the end, I will argue that Heidegger’s anti-Semitic utterances undermine the reliability of his philosophical authority: one cannot count on the insight and critical judgment of a thinker that connects his ideas to a hateful ideology. This does not mean we should dismiss Heidegger’s thought, but it does mean that readers of Heidegger need to reflect on the ways his authority functions when reading his texts—and the ways their reading should adjust to the erosion of this authority.

The Myth of Anonymous Philosophy

I am claiming that Heidegger’s character and politics are relevant for reading his philosophy to the extent that they jeopardize his authority. But why should authority be relevant for reading a philosopher’s work? According to one conception of philosophy, it shouldn’t. We might call this the “geometrical conception” of philosophy. According to this view, philosophy (like geometry) is about constructing arguments or proofs, and reading philosophy is about evaluating them. And when evaluating arguments, only two things are relevant: (1) whether the premises are true, and (2) whether the conclusion follows from the premises. Neither of these criteria has any essential connection to the author. For the purpose of evaluation, the argument is anonymous.

10 See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 276–90; in English, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1989), 274–85.

11 For example, Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

42 Why is the identity of the author irrelevant to these criteria? Reason alone can decide whether the conclusion follows from the premises by checking the validity of the inference. The situation is more complicated when determining the truth of the premises. In some (non-philosophical) cases, readers may have to rely on the testimony of the argument's author, when the truth of the premises cannot be confirmed directly through reason or the readers' own experience. In that case the authority and credibility of the author are relevant. But if we adopt the geometrical conception, philosophy is thoroughly rational and does not rely on testimony. Readers are able to use reason to confirm directly both unproven premises and the inferences drawn from them. This is why Kant dismisses as prejudice any consideration of the author's "prestige" (*Ansehen*): "For truths of reason hold anonymously; the question here is not, *Who* said it? but rather, *What* did he say?"¹²

However, this geometrical conception is overly reductive, and it does not capture the essence of philosophy as practiced by many great philosophers. Arguments are important, to be sure, but there are other elements of philosophical methodology, such as conceptual analysis and phenomenological description. It is true that the authority of the philosopher is irrelevant for many of these elements, since readers can directly confirm their truth for themselves. When reading Husserl's phenomenological description of time consciousness, for example, I can verify that his description matches my own experience of time.

And yet there are at least two elements of philosophy, the truth of which readers cannot—or cannot always—confirm directly. First, the writings of the great philosophers contain unproven statements that express potential insights. This is especially true in the case of Heidegger, whose texts are filled with unproven but insightful claims—for instance, the claim that the essence of art is "the truth of being setting itself to work."¹³ These potential insights are not demonstrated through

12 Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900 et seq.), AA9, 78; in English, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 580.

13 Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes in Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977) (GA 5), 21; in English, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 162.

philosophical argumentation; their truth must be "seen." However, readers cannot always see their truth immediately. In this way, they are different from geometrical first principles. This does not mean that readers should blindly accept unproven statements—though this sometimes happens. Instead, when the philosopher has some authority, readers have reason to trust that the unproven statements are worth sustained reflection that will reveal the full meaning and (possible) truth of the insight over time. And even if the claims of a philosophical authority turn out to be untrue, readers can trust that the claims point to something important and thus worth considering.

The other element of philosophy that readers cannot confirm directly is its conceptual framework. Each of the great philosophers has terminology that divides up the world and shapes our thinking about the phenomena. For Aristotle, this includes "substance," "accident," "potency," and "act." For Heidegger, this includes "Dasein," "being," "attunement" (*Stimmung*), and "clearing" (*Lichtung*). It is impossible to pass judgment on a conceptual framework right away, in part because one has to immerse oneself in the philosophy and begin thinking with the concepts in order to understand them fully. If the philosopher has authority, readers have reason to trust that the concepts shape their thinking in ways that lead to the truth without distorting reality. This is especially important for philosophers like Heidegger who depart from our "common sense" way of talking about the world.

So far, I have argued that both the unproven insights and the conceptual framework of a philosophical work make the authority of the philosopher relevant. In these respects, philosophy is not anonymous. This is confirmed by our everyday experience of reading philosophical texts. Whenever we pick up a philosophical text, the identity of the author matters. Why? There are certainly reasons that do not involve authority. From a purely historical perspective, we want to know who the author is so that the text can add to our historical understanding of the author's views. From an interpretive standpoint, we want to know who the author is so that we can use our knowledge of the author's other texts to shed light on the text we are reading. But beyond this, we want to know who the author is because the author's philosophical authority (or lack of authority) shapes our reading.

We can easily test this through an experiment. Suppose when reading a philosophical text we encounter a puzzling statement for which the author does not argue. Perhaps the meaning of the statement is not clear, or the statement sounds implausible. How do we react? We would not, I think, always treat the statement the same regardless of the author—a position that we might call “philosophical egalitarianism.” Instead we would give the statement more or less consideration depending on the degree of authority that its author has for us. If the sentence appeared in a student paper, we would take it much less seriously than if the same sentence appeared in the work of a philosopher whom we admire and respect. This is because, when a philosopher is authoritative for us, we consider that philosopher to be a reliable source of insight. If someone of deep insight says something puzzling, further reflection may reveal its truth. For the same reason, we read and re-read the text of an authoritative author with a care and patience that we would never devote to an author without authority.

But the authority of the philosopher is not just relevant when we read a text; it is also relevant in deciding which texts to read in the first place. If we read philosophical texts in order to discover the truth, then we want to read authors that we believe are most likely to lead us to the truth: these are precisely those philosophers that are authoritative for us. Who they are will of course vary from person to person, and from tradition to tradition. For those in the tradition of continental philosophy, Heidegger is one such philosophical authority. Indeed, one of the characteristic features of this tradition is the importance it places on reading and re-reading canonical philosophers, both from the recent past and from the history of philosophy.

Where does this leave us with regard to the anonymity of philosophy and the relevance of a philosopher’s authority? This authority is relevant in one sense and irrelevant in another. It is irrelevant for deciding the ultimate truth of the ideas and the validity of the inferences: these have to be decided on their own merits. To that extent, Rorty’s separation of Heidegger the man from his philosophical thought has a point. But the authority of the philosopher still has relevance, because it informs our reading of the text. We trust that what a philosophical authority has to say is worthy of serious reflection and that studying it will lead us closer to the truth.

I suspect that one reason Heidegger’s authority as a philosopher has not been part of the debate is the tacit assumption that any reliance on philosophical authority must be illegitimate. It is therefore important to distinguish its legitimate from its illegitimate uses. The most obvious illegitimate use of philosophical authority is what Jeremy Bentham labels “ipse-dixitism.”¹⁴ This word is derived from the Latin phrase *ipse dixit* (“he himself said so”) and refers to the practice of citing the words of an authority as sufficient evidence for a philosophical statement. Cicero reports that this was the custom of Pythagoras’s followers: “I am not disposed to approve the practice traditionally ascribed to the Pythagoreans, who, when questioned as to the grounds of any assertion that they advanced in debate, are said to have been accustomed to reply ‘He himself said so’ [*ipse dixit*], ‘he himself’ being Pythagoras.”¹⁵

Clearly ipsedixitism is an illegitimate use of philosophical authority; reflecting on why it is illegitimate will help us to define the requirements for using philosophical authority legitimately. Fundamentally, ipsedixitism is illegitimate because it is not compatible with doing philosophy for oneself. This is because doing philosophy for oneself requires at least two things. First, one must actively engage in philosophical reflection—either developing one’s own sequence of thoughts and reasoning or actively following the thoughts and reasoning of another. Here the Pythagoreans erred, not because they followed Pythagoras’s doctrine, but because they showed no awareness of the thought and reasoning behind the doctrine, and thus could not defend it in argument. Second, when philosophizing for oneself, the ultimate criterion for truth must lie within oneself—that is, in one’s own judgment or use of reason.¹⁶ One affirms a statement to be true not because Pythagoras or some other authority says so, but because one judges it to be true on its own merits. Any legitimate use of philosophical authority will therefore require a measure of independence from

¹⁴ Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1838–1843), 542.

¹⁵ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, I. v, §10, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 13.

¹⁶ Cf. Kant’s definition of *Selbstdenken*. *Gesammelte Schriften* (AA 8), 146.

46 the authority, as well as an openness to critical disagreement. Indeed, if one never disagrees with an authority, there is reason to suspect a lack of true independence.

Is it possible to treat an author as a philosophical authority and meet these requirements? I would argue that it is. This requires some combination of critical judgment and trust in the philosophical authority. Readers might treat a thinker as a philosophical authority in that they trust that what the thinker says is worthy of serious consideration, and that studying it will lead them closer to the truth. This use of authority is compatible with the first requirement; indeed, it encourages readers to reflect on what the philosopher says and to think *with* the text. And this use of authority is compatible with the second requirement. Although readers trust that studying the authority's thought will lead them closer to the truth, they are free to use their critical judgment and to disagree.

The combination of trust and critical judgment makes possible an interesting structural feature in the relationship to a philosophical authority. The trust that one places in a philosophical authority can and should be confirmed or disconfirmed through the process of philosophical inquiry. If I trust that a particular thinker is a reliable source of insight, I can confirm this by reflecting critically on the thinker's works. If these reflections bear fruit, my original trust is confirmed or even strengthened. On the other hand, a false authority can be found out in the course of philosophical investigation, if the reflections come up empty.

This trust-confirmation structure is also present for other types of authorities—in particular, the teacher. Indeed, the teacher is a particularly apt model for understanding Heidegger's philosophical authority. Arendt notes the great fame and success that Heidegger enjoyed as a teacher,¹⁷ and so much of his thought was developed in his lecture courses. In the case of a teacher, students have to trust that what is taught is true and important to learn. Ideally, the students will be able to confirm the truth and importance of what they have learned

17 Cf. the speech she gave to commemorate his eightieth birthday. Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Briefe 1925 bis 1975 und andere Zeugnisse*, ed. Ursula Ludz (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), 179.

as they continue their studies. Of course, a philosophy teacher does not teach particular philosophical positions so much as a way of thinking. As Arendt writes about Heidegger: “There is a teacher; one can perhaps learn to think.”¹⁸ The students have to trust that this way of thinking is fruitful and leads to the truth. Its success in doing so confirms the original trust.

If the legitimate use of philosophical authority has this trust-confirmation structure, there might seem to be relatively little risk involved: any false authority will be found out soon enough. However, the task of interpretation sometimes requires that readers postpone critical evaluation—especially when the philosopher's thought is demanding. In order to evaluate a philosophical position, one must first understand it. In the case of a difficult thinker like Heidegger, this requires that readers take a deep dive into the philosopher's thought, trying out the ideas and seeing the world through the philosopher's conceptual framework. All of this takes time and delays full critical evaluation, even if preliminary evaluations are possible along the way. In fact, there is the danger that the task of critical evaluation is postponed indefinitely—either because readers are unsure that they fully understand the philosopher's thought, or because they are unsure by what criterion it should be judged. In the meantime, readers immersed in the philosophy trust that the effort will pay off, and that their thinking is directed toward the truth. If the philosopher is not worthy of this trust, there is certainly a risk. A false authority might shape their thinking, however subtly, in ways that distort reality and make them more open to the kind of twisted ideology expressed in the *Black Notebooks*. Indeed, the philosopher Karl Jaspers had this risk in mind when he recommended Heidegger be banned from teaching after the war, claiming that his mode of thinking “would have a very damaging effect on students at the present time.”¹⁹

18 *Ibid.*, 182 (trans. mine).

19 Quoted in Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 339. Heidegger was in fact banned from teaching in the years immediately following the war.

Is Heidegger worthy of the trust that comes with philosophical authority? What can we say about his authority in light of his remarks about “world Jewry” and “the increasing power of the Jews” in his private philosophical reflections? Rather than giving a definitive answer to these questions, I will outline some of the issues one would need to consider in answering them fully. Above all, one would need to consider how philosophical authority is acquired and lost. This topic is complex, especially because one needs to distinguish between *de facto* and *de jure* ways of addressing it. That is, one needs to distinguish (1) how philosophical authority actually *is* acquired and lost, and (2) how it *ought* to be acquired and lost.

On the *de facto* level, a philosopher becomes an authority when someone or some group comes to regard that philosopher as an authority. One way that this happens is through tradition. When one enters a philosophical tradition, one inherits a canon of philosophical authorities, whose texts are read and discussed again and again by members of the tradition, because the canonical thinkers are regarded as reliable sources of insight. Heidegger clearly functions as an authority in the tradition of continental philosophy. And many first come to regard Heidegger as an authority upon entering this tradition—hearing and reading others give serious attention to his thought, and then giving it serious attention themselves. This is certainly how I came to regard Heidegger as an authority when encountering his thought in graduate school.

To decide whether one is justified in regarding a thinker as an authority on the basis of tradition would require a complex discussion of the nature of tradition and canon. However, even if the tradition provides the initial basis for recognizing an authority, one can confirm this authority along the lines discussed in the last section. If one gives serious attention to the philosopher’s texts, and these texts consistently reward this attention with insights and advancement toward the truth, then one has a first-hand basis for regarding the philosopher as an authority. Indeed, it seems that one is justified in doing so. But why?

Gadamer notes that genuine recognition of authority means recognizing the exceptional judgment and insight of the

person with authority.²⁰ This points to the ultimate source of legitimate authority: a person has authority by virtue of some exceptional capacity or capacities that are reliable sources of truth. It is easy to see this in the case of expertise, which is one kind of exceptional capacity. If someone has genuine expertise in a particular area—say, Egyptian hieroglyphics—that person has authority with respect to that area and the person’s judgments within it carry more weight. One is therefore justified in treating someone as an authority in an area, if there is sufficient evidence of an exceptional capacity that is a reliable source of truth in that area. In the case of hieroglyphics, this might be an advanced degree in Egyptology from a reputable institution. On the other hand, if there is evidence that calls into question this exceptional capacity, this undermines the person’s authority.

Applying this account to philosophical authority, we can say that one is justified in treating a thinker as a philosophical authority if one has evidence of exceptional capacities that are reliable sources of philosophical truth. What might these capacities be? Perhaps the most important is insight. If we observe that a thinker consistently provides us with insights that reward critical reflection, we attribute an exceptional power of insight to that thinker. Other capacities that underlie philosophical authority include exacting critical judgment and a sense for what questions are truly important. A full account of philosophical authority would need to determine all the capacities that underlie it and the precise nature of these capacities. Of course, non-authoritative philosophers may share these capacities to varying degrees. What distinguishes philosophical authorities is the (1) superiority and (2) reliability of their capacities, which allow readers to count on them as guides to the important questions.

We can therefore reformulate the problem of Heidegger and authority in this way: do Heidegger’s abhorrent anti-Semitic remarks give reason to doubt either the superiority or the reliability of his insight, critical judgment, and sense for what is important? The answer is clearly yes—at least on the question of reliability. Of course, reliable does not mean

²⁰ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 284; *Truth and Method*, 281.

50 infallible: reliably insightful thinkers can sometimes write things that are not insightful; reliably critical thinkers can sometimes have lapses in judgment. However, in Heidegger's case the errors are so egregious that they point to a fundamental defect in his philosophical capacities—a defect that undermines his reliability as a guide to philosophical truth. One cannot count on the insight and critical judgment of someone who embeds considered anti-Semitic remarks in his philosophical reflections.

But there is a problem with dismissing Heidegger's authority completely: his writings do contain an abundance of powerful insights and evidence of exacting critical judgment. He clearly demonstrates the exceptional capacities that underlie philosophical authority, even if these capacities are fundamentally unreliable in his case. It is not without reason that he is a central figure in the canon of continental philosophy. A possible solution to this difficulty would be to ascribe to Heidegger a problematic and severely restricted authority. One could continue to trust that his writings are worthy of serious reflection, since they are written by a thinker with great insight who has influenced other great thinkers, many of them Jewish. But one would not trust that his writings are *reliable* sources of insight, and that reflecting on them will reliably lead one closer to the truth. And one would be less trusting of his conceptual framework and patterns of thought, which can subtly shape one's thinking when reading his work.

This is only the beginning of an answer to the question of Heidegger's authority. A more complete answer would need to address a number of complex issues, including the possibility of dividing his authority into various philosophical domains. For example, one might distinguish Heidegger's authority with respect to art and language from his authority with respect to politics and history, and claim that his authority is only damaged with respect to the latter.²¹ In order to assess the validity of dividing up authority in this way, one would need to determine more precisely the domains of the capacities that underlie philosophical authority. It seems plausible that one could have reliable insight in the domain of art but not the

²¹ I want to thank Nikola Mirković for mentioning this possibility.

domain of politics; it seems less plausible that one could have reliable critical judgment in one philosophical domain but not another, since critical judgment is by its nature more universal in its application. A related question concerns the periodization of a philosopher's authority. Could the Heidegger of the 1920s preserve his authority even if the Heidegger of the 1930s loses it? The answer to this question depends on the continuity and stability of the capacities that underlie authority over time. In any case, common sense would suggest that a thinker doesn't become an anti-Semite—or the kind of thinker that could entertain anti-Semitic views—overnight.

In the end, authority is a matter of trust. Reading a philosophical authority is like listening to a good teacher: we can let our guard down, trusting that the teacher will generally lead us in the right direction. In light of what we have learned about Heidegger's politics, it is no longer possible to trust him in this way. This means that readers of Heidegger need to approach his texts with a combination of openness and caution—attitudes that are not easy to combine. Above all, it is important for readers to maintain a critical distance and not to postpone for long the task of critical evaluation. If one takes a deep dive into Heidegger's thought, one must remember to come up frequently for air. In doing so, it is helpful to keep in mind a question raised by Heidegger's anti-Semitism: if he could get something like *that* wrong, what else might he get wrong?

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The Passion of Beyng and Thinking: Towards the Possibility of Reconciliation in Heidegger

YULIYA A. TSUTSEROVA

Why is love rich beyond all other possible human experiences and a sweet burden to those seized in its grasp? Because we become what we love and yet remain ourselves.

—Martin Heidegger to Hannah Arendt, Letter 2, from 21 February 1925

I am ready at any time, and I said as much to Martin, to talk about such issues in an objective, political way—I like to think I know a few things about them—but only on the condition that personal, human issues are kept out of it.

→p.105

—Hannah Arendt to Elfride Heidegger, Letter 49, from 10 February 1950

Reconciliation is certainly no trifling matter; even in its imaginary rehearsals, the invasive scrutiny and “pruning” of certain intimate, vibrantly alive sinews of the self which it portends elicits reticence in anyone who summons up enough courage to cast an inquisitive glance in its direction.¹ More often than not, it is a desperate measure taken in the wake of a perfect storm of complicit desire and circumstance, the passing of which leaves its survivors in a state of even greater perplexity and vulnerability than at its outbreak. It is sought after when the loss of the miracle of mutuality is rejected outright as tantamount to a dissolution of the self whose “pearl of great price” is not itself, but rather its communion with an Other. This is the predicament in which Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt find themselves in the mid-1920s: the recognition of their bond as a kind of lifeline that sustains the continued flourishing of their respective selves, which neither is prepared to cut nor shorten,

1 A courage which Heidegger will ultimately specify as the “courage for the abyss.” (Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, *Gesamtausgabe III: Abteilung Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen, Vorträge – Gedachtes*, vol. 65, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989) Part I, §8, 28: “Mut zum Ab-grund.”)

54 imposes the only remaining alternative—a lifelong epistolary negotiation of their proximity and distance, one which ultimately spares them the calamities of its asymptotes, con-summation, and absence. An intimacy borne of and as shared thought, it cannot but engender and cultivate the same—loving as thinking, thinking as loving—and thereby bring the comfortable distinction between the two into question.²

Admittedly, Heidegger is hardly the first philosopher one would instinctively turn to for wisdom in matters of relation: after all, Emmanuel Levinas, the uncompromising champion of alterity, has condemned Heidegger’s preoccupation with being as irredeemably oblivious to the ethical imperative of the Other.³ In light of such a categorical dismissal, dare one hear Heidegger’s first conciliatory appeal to Arendt in his letter from February 10, 1925—“I will never be allowed to possess you, yet from now on you will belong in my life. [...] And my faithfulness to you must only help you to remain faithful to yourself.”⁴—as

2 Indeed, as an extension of Heidegger’s own questioning of the potentials and limits of thinking.

3 The thrust of Levinas’s criticism is helpfully pinpointed by James Magrini, as follows: “By privileging ontology over ethics, the primordial responsibility we owe to the Other, which for Levinas is total and absolute, the solidarity that is at the heart of all authentic ethical relationships, can never legitimately be attained or experienced.” (James Magrini, “The Work of Art and Truth of Being as ‘Historical’: Reading *Being and Time*, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art,’ and the ‘Turn’ [Kehre] in Heidegger’s Philosophy of the 1930s,” *Philosophy Today* 54, no. 4 (2010): 350.) Yet such a criticism presupposes the very dichotomy between thinking and loving that this essay would humbly reconsider: indeed, the imperative of loving an “Other who radically transcends any understanding I might have” remains far from self-explanatory or self-evidently possible to its author. (Ibid., 351.) To cite a thinker who has ventured upon a trajectory alternative to Levinas, William Desmond does not shy away from evaluating Heidegger’s notion of *Seyn* as origin, precisely in terms of the contrast between $\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ and $\alpha\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$, the former absorbing otherness into itself and the latter releasing it into its own. (William Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 236–61.) Richard Rojcewicz has gone a step further in moderating the criticism of Levinas by observing that the “ascendancy of Being” in the

later Heidegger “is not a matter of domination or imposition”—it is “not unilateral” but *dialogical*. (Richard Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 206.) In analyzing Heidegger’s later writings on art, Krzysztof Ziarek has highlighted their sensitivity to “enhancing the alterity of what remains Other” and has characterized them as signaling a “change in relationality [which] has a distinctive ethical dimension.” (Krzysztof Ziarek, “The Social Figure of Art: Heidegger and Adorno on the Paradoxical Autonomy of Artworks,” in *Between Ethics and Aesthetics: Crossing the Boundaries*, ed. Dorota Glowacka and Stephen Boos (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 234.) On the other end of the spectrum, John Anderson draws an intriguing parallel between Heidegger’s relation of beings and being to *Seyn* and Hesiod’s cosmology as “the emergence of creatures out of chaos, that is out of a gap, and without the act of love, that is, without a father”—an account which, in turn, betrays unexpected resonance with the “agapeic” creation *ex nihilo* privileged by Desmond. (John M. Anderson, “Truth, Process, and Creature in Heidegger’s Thought,” in *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, ed. Manfred S. Frings (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 37; see also Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 249–51.)

4 Heidegger and Arendt, “Letter 1, from 10 February 1925,” in *Briefe 1925–1975 und andere Zeugnisse*, ed. Ursula Ludz (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), 11 (trans. mine).

perhaps indicative of a greater capacity for thinking relation than the celebrated Levinasian reading is willing to concede? It is none other than this possibility which has served as an impetus for the following reflection. Its intention is to bring into relief certain structural features of Heidegger’s vision of *beyng*⁵ [Seyn] and thinking, which converge in an unexpected figure of compassion, the only bond capable of spanning the difference—however abyssal—between the self, the Other, and *beyng*.

The very morphology of the word “compassion” reflects its significance of shared passion, of shared suffering (a nuance of great import in the present context). To speak of the compassion of *beyng* and thinking, then, is to conjecture that they undergo some kind of ordeal together, an ordeal that “disfigures” and “reconfigures” them for the sake of rendering them fit for the figure that is their unity-in-difference. Leaving aside the question of whether such an ordeal is instrumental in or constitutive of such a figure, let us direct our attention to certain accounts of *beyng* and thinking in Heidegger which offer clues as to what it might mean for *beyng* and thinking to suffer.

Let us pose the question of what ordeal *beyng* might be understood as undergoing. For this purpose, there is no richer, more mature source in Heidegger’s writings than his *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. In this text, we come upon *beyng* during an “event of appropriation” (*Ereignis*), an ordeal which appears neither strictly necessary (in the determinist sense of the term) nor entirely volitional (in the sense of personal agency). Its motive, its motor, so to speak, is never explicitly or fully accounted for. Nevertheless, the motifs of the ordeal itself are distinctive and recurrent, such that we may attempt to reconstruct something of this emergent figure. Thus, *Erzitterung* (shuddering), *Erstreckung* (stretching), *Streit* (strife), *Zerklüftung* (cleaving), *Scheidung* (scission),⁶ and *Riß* (rift)⁷ coalesce into two

5 The “y” in the spelling of the term “beyng” [Seyn] is preserved throughout this article in order to signal the distinctness of its philosophical meaning, in Heidegger, from that of being with an “i.” *Beyng* with a “y” denotes something which precedes what Heidegger calls the “ontological difference”—the difference between being and beings—and cannot be reduced to the former. *Beyng* with a “y” contains both being with an “i” and nothing within itself, and being with an “i” emerges from this “pre-ontological difference.”

6 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part V, §242, 383: “Welcher Art ist die ursprüngliche Einheit, daß sie sich in diese Scheidung auseinanderwirft, und in welchem Sinn sind die Geschiedenen hier als Wesung der Abgründigkeit gerade einig?”

7 Ibid., Part VIII, §281, 510: “Streit, die ursprüngliche Bergung der Zerklüftung, weil der innigste Riß.”

principal moments: a building of tension within something presumably singular and simple, and a resolution of this tension by way of its division into something plural and complex. Thus, for *beyng*, the event of appropriation—of its coming into its own—may be characterized as a literal and figurative discovery of a difference, an interval—and therein, of the imperative of relation—within itself. In fact, looking more closely at Heidegger’s most explicit formulation of this ordeal it’s clear that it ushers in something like a triad of two-selves-in-relation: “Only because *beyng* essences nothingly, does it have not-being as its other. For this other is the other of its own self. As essencing nothingly, it simultaneously makes possible and enforces otherness.”⁸

The difference that opens up within the travail of *beyng* is the birthplace of passionate, suffering thinking—to be more precise, a place of rebirth for thinking whose innate interval enabling its constitutional orientation towards the Other has collapsed as a result of gripping the Other too tightly in its embrace. The walls of such thinking close in upon it until it either crumbles under their weight or until the sedimented “bottom” of its *fundamentum inconcussum*⁹ “drops out,” releasing it into the vast span of difference that is the wellspring (rather than support) of *beyng*.¹⁰ In both scenarios, thinking is at its breaking

8 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part IV, §146, 267: “Nur weil das Seyn nichthaft west, hat es zu seinem Anderen das Nichtsein. Denn dieses Andere ist das Andere seiner Selbst. Als nichthaftes wesend ermöglicht und erzwingt es zugleich Andertheit”. The parallel with Hegel’s definition of the thing in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Die Wahrnehmung oder das Ding und die Täuschung*) is striking: “Das Ding ist Eins, in sich reflektiert; es ist für sich, aber es ist auch für ein Anderes, und zwar ist es ein anderes für sich, als es für [ein] Anderes ist. Das Ding ist hiernach für sich und auch für ein Anderes, ein gedoppeltes verschiedenes Sein, aber es ist auch Eins”. (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Werke, vol. 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986, 101); we owe this discovery to Gerhard Richter’s reference to this passage in the context of his discussion of Benjamin’s notion of critique, in “Critique and the Thing: Benjamin and Heidegger,” in *Sparks Will Fly: Benjamin and Heidegger*, ed. Andrew E. Benjamin and Dimitris Vardoulakis (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 35, ft. 23.) Although the point of departure of Heidegger’s critique in these paragraphs is a statement from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, “Being

and Nothing are the same,” Heidegger’s positive alternative bears closer resemblance to Hegel’s formulation in *Phänomenologie*. Indeed, Heidegger takes care to distinguish his own notion of the Nothing as “the other of its own self” of *beyng* from Hegel’s negativity as a transitional moment on the way to self-identity; in contrast, the stake of Heidegger’s account is the *Inzwischen* (in-between), which preserves the difference between the “self” and “the other of its own self” of *beyng* for the sake of another other—that of beings. (Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part IV, §144–6, 264–68.)

9 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part VIII, §261, 444.

10 At this juncture, one may justifiably wonder why the remedy for such an imploding of thinking might not lie in the thinking of the reciprocal Other, rather than in *beyng*. In the case under consideration, however—that of reciprocated possessive affection—the implosion has in all likelihood reduced both to a subjection of impotence, for the very reason of its commensurability. It is precisely the incommensurability, the immeasurability, of *beyng* which renders it uniquely effective in prying thinking open within a paradoxical, asymmetrical ratio with itself.

point¹¹—on the verge not of a nervous breakdown (although the ordeal in question may certainly manifest in this manner), but rather that of a crisis (with the emphasis on the divisive aspect of κρίνειν)—of its very ontological core in and through its “in-stantaneity in the middle of *beyng*.”¹² Arendt herself gives voice to this simultaneously harrowing and heartening prospect on the occasion of Heidegger’s eightieth birthday: “Thinking [...] can turn into a passion/suffering [...] a *passionate/suffering* [leidenschaftlich] thinking, in which thinking and being alive become one [...] thinking as a ‘pathos,’ a suffering undergoing/bearing which befalls one.”¹³ Certainly, as Arendt observes, the first resort of thinking will always be self-critique: “Thinking relates to its own results peculiarly destructively, that is to say, critical.”¹⁴ As a delay tactic, self-critique resembles the self-sabotaging toil of Penelope, a metaphor taken from Arendt:

When one desires to measure thinking in its immediate, passionate/suffering [leidenschaftlich] according to its results, the same thing happens to such a one as to the veil of Penelope—it would be [like] relentlessly unravelling, of one’s own accord, that which had been spun during the day at night, in order to be able to begin anew the next day.¹⁵

Only when its attempts to reason with itself—to measure itself in reference to its own rapidly contracting perimeter—have proven futile, does thinking consider “reasoning together” with the only Other in a position to buttress and expand it—with *beyng*. Heidegger realizes this when he writes to Arendt on 6

11 Ibid., Part VIII, §270, 486: “der Mensch ... am Seyn sich bricht [...]”.

12 Ibid. Part I, §5, 12–3: “Inständigkeit in der Mitte des Seyns.” In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger employs similar language to characterize the gateway to the analytic of Dasein (and eventually, to the understanding of being) as the destruction (*Destruktion*) of the history of ontology (although, of course, in this text such an analytic is not yet effectuated by *beyng*). (Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914–1970, vol. 2, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), Introduction, Ch. 2, §6, 27–30.)

13 Heidegger and Arendt, “Letter 116, from 26 February 1969,” in *Briefe*, 184, 186 (trans. mine).

14 Ibid., 185 (trans. mine).

15 Ibid.

Yesterday, while looking over my earlier manuscripts on the interpretation of Kant (I am still labouring on the *Kant Book*), I came across sketches for your manuscript. Everything revolves around ‘Da-sein,’ turning away from the Subject and consciousness in order to reach thither. [...] And now I must first go after being and therefore, after the relation between Dasein and being, by way of many detours and returns. [...] I saw that the analytic of Dasein remains a continual wandering upon the edge of a knife, which is simultaneously threatened not only by a collapse, on the one side, into an only modified subjectivism, but also, on the other, into an as yet insufficiently thought out $\Lambda\text{-}\lambda\ \eta\ \theta\ \epsilon\ \iota\ \alpha$.¹⁶

Thus, before thinking can be reborn of beyng, it must resort to the desperate hyper-measure (*Übermaß*) of throwing itself¹⁷ at the mercy of the only power whose capacity for passion and suffering far exceeds its own, and which is thus able not only to comprehend and bear its burden, but also to restore its original strength. Heidegger calls this leap of thought *Selbstbesinnung*, a term particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation in the English translation, and which may therefore be more effectively rendered as “getting a sense of oneself.”¹⁸ Such self-

16 Heidegger and Arendt, “Letter 62, from 6 May 1950,” in *Briefe*, 103–4 (trans. mine).

17 William Desmond speaks of the *passio essendi* of Being, as well as of the “release [of the human being] beyond itself to a new intimacy with the more elemental passion of being”; however, in his view, Heidegger never brings intuitions regarding the possibility of such compassion to full fruition, from which he is prevented by excessive dependence on the language of “projection.” In contrast, I suggest that to translate various derivatives of *Wurf/werfen* in such a way is to unnecessarily burden the gesture with subjectivizing overtones and to overlook the nuance of *Entwurf/entwerfen* as a kind of tearing of the self out and away from the self, throwing it at the mercy of being—an expression which I have opted for above. (Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*), 246).

18 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part I, §17, 44: “Daher ist die Besinnung – Einsprung in die Wahrheit des Seins – notwendig Selbst-besinnung.”

abandonment to beyng is neither a merely psychological coloring draped over the bankruptcy of an otherwise ethereal quasi-activity of speculation, nor an abdication and erasure of the will of the kind encountered in Schopenhauer.¹⁹ Indeed, Heidegger clarifies that such a “throwing” is not a “throwing away” of the self, nor does it amount to becoming selfless (*sichlos*).²⁰ Perhaps Arendt puts it best when she characterizes Heidegger’s thinking in Letter 116 (dated 26 September 1969) as follows: “This thinking has a burrowing quality proper only to it. [...] In this entirely non-contemplative activity, he burrows into the depths, but not so as to discover within this dimension [...] a final and assured ground or to bring it to light, but rather so as to lay down paths and stake out ‘pathmarks’ while remaining within the depths.”²¹ Contrite thinking seeks refuge not in itself, but in beyng which has no “bottom.”

Yet the decisive plunge into the abyss of beyng is by no means an evasion or respite, but rather only the beginning of the arduous labour of rebirth: caught up in the riptide tearing through the very core of beyng,²² the conflated thinking Subject is about to undergo a rending-in-twain (*Zertrümmerung*),²³ a splitting (*Entzweiung*).²⁴ The reticence to which I referred at the outset is not lost on Heidegger: indeed, for him, it goes well beyond the classical astonishment (*Erstaunen*) of philosophy to being “terror-struck” (*Entsetzen*).²⁵ This is the only way

19 Julian Young draws a helpful distinction between the “passivity” of thought in Heidegger and Schopenhauer, as follows: “In *Gelassenheit*, for example, explicitly distinguishing himself from Schopenhauer, [Heidegger] says that though ‘releasement’ [...] does require a kind of ‘non-willing.’* this is *not* to be understood as a matter of ‘flea[ting] in the realm of unreality [...] lacking all power of action [...] a will-less letting in of everything and basically, the denial of the will to live.’** What is ‘denied,’ rather, is a specific kind of willing: ‘self-assertive’ willing, ‘human self-will,’*** or as he often says ‘will to power.’ What we need in place of this is a willing [characterized by] an openness that allows Being to appropriate us.” (* and ** point to English translations of Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 79 and 80, respectively, while *** points to Martin Heidegger, “The Turning,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 47.)

20 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part VIII, §271, 488: “Überall jedoch bleibt hier kein Platz für die Deutung des Menschen als ‘Subjekt’, weder im Sinne des ich-haften noch im Sinne des gemeinschaftlichen Subjekts. Die Entrückung ist aber auch kein Außersichsein des Menschen in der Form eines Sichloswerdens.”

21 Heidegger and Arendt, “Letter 116, from 26 September 1969,” in *Briefe*, 182–3 (trans. mine).
22 Cf. Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part I, §34, 75, Part IV, §157, 279.

23 Ibid., Part VIII, §264, 456: “Wo es die Zertrümmerung des Subjekts gilt [...]?”

24 Ibid., Part V.c), §208, 331: “Wahrheit ist [...] die abgründige Zerklüftung, in der das Seiende zur Entzweiung kommt und im Streit stehen muß.”

25 Ibid., Part VIII, §269, 483: “Entsetzen,’ jetzt als Grundstimmung der ‘Er-fahrung’ des Seyns gemeint.”

60 for thinking—which has closed in upon itself to be pried open and regain its optimal “disclosedness” (*Entschlossenheit*), as Heidegger reiterates to Arendt.²⁶

As thinking is torn asunder and opened up, it is also set in motion: in fact, its reinstated internal difference—which is, among other things, a dynamic of counterforces—is precisely what makes such motion possible, and with it a certain kind of e-motion, an outward movement, a movement-towards, a tendency, an inclination towards the other. Indeed, Heidegger insists on redefining selfhood (*Selbstheit*) as a “realm of happening” (*Geschehnisbereich*).²⁷ And, if the implosion of thinking may be glimpsed as a result of the extinguishment of its centrifugal force—the force that pushes it outward and counteracts the gravitational pull of the black hole that is its center—then its explosion within the crucible of being may be attributed to the latter’s supply of precisely such a force.

In Heidegger’s view, thinking can not only survive this maelstrom, but thrive within it. In order to do so, however, it must overcome one final complication: that of the apparent disproportion between its own finite *measure* and the hyper-measure (*Übermaß*) of being.²⁸ Indeed, this hyper-measure is “no merely unsatisfactory ‘too much,’ but rather a self-withdrawing from all estimation and measurement.”²⁹ How can thinking ever hope to “measure up” to the “abyssal inexhaustibility” (*abgründige Unerschöpfung*)³⁰ of being? Indeed, never through a presumption (*Anmaßung*) of giving, imposing its own measure (*Maßgabe*) upon being.³¹ This is the juncture at which thinking must shift into a higher register—and this by no other means than those of *art*. Among all of the potentials of thinking, Heidegger sets art apart as that singular capacity for “going-over-and-above-oneself” in reaching towards that which is higher than it, which towers over it.³² This is

26 Heidegger and Arendt, “Letter 62, from 6 May 1950,” in *Briefe*, 104 (trans. mine).

27 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part I, §41, 84.

28 Ibid., Part VII, §256, 413: “das Seyn [...] als jene kehrlige Mitte [...] das Seyn als Er-ignis, das aus diesem kehrligen Übermaß seiner selbst geschieht.”

29 Ibid., Part IV, §131, 249: “Das Übermaß [im Wesen des Seyns] is kein bloßes mengenhaftes Zuviel, sondern das Sichertziehen aller Schätzung und Ausmessung.”

30 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part I, §9, 29.

31 Ibid., Part I, §7, 25: “Wenn er [der Mensch] dieses von sich aus vollziehen muß, ist dann nicht die Anmaßung der Maßgabe noch größer als dort, wo er einfachin als der Maßstab angesetzt bleibt?”

32 Ibid., Part I, §4, 10: “das Übersichhinausfahren in das uns Überhöhende.”

61 because it is essentially a capacity for seeking and questioning in anticipation of an answer that does not come from itself. Thus, Heidegger characterizes the poet—one “creating thoughtfully”—as the “seeker of being in the most proper hyper-measure of the power to seek.”³³ The paradoxical grace of the “answer” of being consists in measuring thinking according to the measure which being “carries within itself,” in finding thinking falling desperately short of such a measure, and ultimately allowing it to draw strength and expand from within its inexhaustible, overflowing source.³⁴

Yet art as the higher register of thinking harbors a further secret: it is suffused by and borders on the quintessential relationality of being. That is to say, the configuration of two-selves-in-relation that being assumes within the event of appropriation prefigures and transfigures thinking in its own image by way of its elevation into the higher register of “creating thoughtfully.” The principal indication of this analogy is the recurrence of the language of strife and rift (employed with regard to the ordeal of being within the event of appropriation) in Heidegger’s pursuit of the essence of art in the multiple versions of his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art.” As early as in the first version, the prototype of two-selves-in-relation resonates within the articulation of art as strife (*Streit*) between earth and world—a rupture (*Riß*) that is no disruption (*Störung*) in the sense of destruction (*Zerstörung*),³⁵ but rather an intimacy³⁶ of opposed vectors of contraction and expansion, respectively. The compound definition of strife as “standing-towards-each-other stepping-apart-from-each-other” (*zueinanderstehendes Auseinandertreten*) in the second version similarly emphasizes the dynamic tension between distantiation and approximation within

35 Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” *Gesamtausgabe I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914–1970*, vol. 5, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977), 35. In the immediately preceding paragraph, the third version underscores the nuance between difference and separation, describing the world and earth as “essentially different from each other, yet never separate.” (“Welt und Erde sind wesentlich von einander verschieden und doch niemals getrennt.”)

36 Heidegger, “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” *Heidegger Studien*, no. 5 (1989): 12: “Die Innigkeit ihres widerwendigen Sichzugehörens.”

33 Ibid., Part I, §4, 11: “Die Seinsfrage ist der Sprung in das Seyn, den der Mensch als der Sucher des Seyns vollzieht, sofern er ein *denkerisch* Schaffender ist. Sucher des Seyns ist im eigensten Übermaß sucherischer Kraft der Dichter, der das Seyn ‘stiftet.’”

34 Ibid., Part I, §5, 12: “Das Beständnis des Seyns selbst trägt sein Maß in sich, wenn es überhaupt noch eines Maßes bedarf.”

the greater whole that is art.³⁷ Moreover, in the third version, the two “selves” are said to amplify each other’s otherness precisely by way of mutual influence: “In strife, each carries the other over and above themselves.”³⁸ The unmistakable refrain of these reflections is that the otherness which unfolds within “creating thoughtfully” is not a mutual exclusion, but rather a mutuality of contraries. Thus, for thinking, strife translates into a delicate balance between its dual capacities for self-containment and self-extension, which is the condition of possibility of any sound relation—both to the Other and to the self.

Let us not forget that, for Heidegger, such reformed thinking-as-relating ultimately springs from and is sustained by participation in the passion/suffering [*Leidenschaft*] undergone by being in the event of appropriation—by an extraordinary kind of compassion or empathy between a finite being and infinite being (and even nothing). For thinking whose intrinsic relationality has all but collapsed, the path to recovery lies through a kind of *imitatio* of the ordeal of being—namely, through allowing itself to be expanded in conformity with the “between” (*das Zwischen*) which opens up in the midst of being. Indeed, such *imitatio* is reflected in the very terms Heidegger selects to designate thinking (in the most profound sense of the term) and the “between”—*Dasein* and *Da-sein*, respectively.³⁹ The “between” assured by the event of appropriation is by no means a void, but rather a “middle” (*Mitte*) that mediates between being and nothing within being, and by extension between being and beings, as well as between human beings as thinking persons.⁴⁰ Surpassing the impasse of the subject-object relation, it is both “counter” and “encounter” simultaneously: “Ap-propriation as de-cision brings op-position to the scissioned: this towards-each-other of the broadest needful decision must stand in highest ‘counter,’ because it bridges the abyss of the used being.”⁴¹ Thus it becomes clear

37 Heidegger, “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” in *De l’origine de l’œuvre d’art: première version*, trans. Emmanuel Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987), 34.

38 Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” 35: “Im Streit trägt jedes das andere über sich hinaus.”

39 Heidegger, *Beiträge*, Part V, §19I, 311: “So ist das Da-sein das *Zwischen* zwischen den Menschen (als geschichtegründenden) und den Göttern (in ihrer Geschichte).” Cf. *Ibid.*, Part V, §217, 343: “das Da-sein das *Zwischen* zwischen dem *Seyn* und dem *Seienden*.”

40 *Ibid.*, Part I, §34, 73: “Das Ereignis ist die sich selbst ermittelnde und vermittelnde Mitte.”

that, for Heidegger, the mystery of the primordial withdrawal and embrace of being, its initiative of simultaneous ex-propriation and ap-propriation, engenders and vouchsafes every derivative form of rupture-suture and reserves the time and place of every parting and meeting again. The mystery of being and the mystery of love are intertwined, and one cannot be glimpsed apart from the other.

With the project *On Reconciliation/Über Versöhnung*, Dora García has created a space for us to come together and consider the ways in which two persons—two thinkers—undertook and followed through on one of the most trying ordeals that may befall two human beings in the course of their finite existence: reconciliation. In this essay, I have chosen—as did Hannah Arendt—to attend to Heidegger’s grappling with questions of identity, difference, and relation for the sake of not prematurely foreclosing on the configuration of his thinking. This has required a moderation of the default stance of antipathy with a guarded posture of empathy, which I believe has been rewarded with insights into thinking-as-relating—and perhaps even thinking-as-loving—which cannot be easily dismissed as idiosyncratic ephemera of Heideggerian thought. It is my hope that such insights might encourage the reader-viewers of Dora García’s project on Arendt and Heidegger to weigh the pros and cons of compassionate thinking and proceed—with all due caution—towards the possibility of reconciliation.

41 *Ibid.*, Part VIII, §267, 470: “Die Er-eignung als Ent-scheidung bringt den Geschiedenen die Ent-gegnung: daß dieses Zu-einander der weitesten nothaften Entscheidung im äußersten ‘Gegen’ stehen muß, weil es den Ab-grund des gebrauchten *Seyns* überbrückt.”

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The Limits of the Reconcilable: Arendt, Eichmann, and Heidegger

REBECCA KATZ THOR

65

To reconcile is not to forgive; it is rather to come to terms with, to make due. Not to let bygones be bygones, but to somehow overcome. Reconciliation might be a sort of forgiveness without affect, an agreeable, mutual understanding of an event rather than an emotional embrace. Yet, to forgive implies that there is someone to whom the act of forgiveness is directed, and in turn, that someone bears responsibility. In Jewish religious thought one can differentiate between two types of forgiveness: *mehila* and *selhila*. The former is a pardon that can be achieved, a release from debt and further punishments. What is crucial, however, is that the offender explicitly asks for forgiveness. The latter, *selhila*, is beyond reach, as it is repentance and a purification by a spiritual return to a divine presence.¹ What a state such as Germany after the Holocaust could offer, and to a certain extent also did offer, was such a release of *mehila*—through reparations and restitution.

In Hannah Arendt’s rendering, reconciliation might be reserved for that which cannot be forgiven. It is, for her, a third way between forgiveness and revenge, since it enables a political judgment. The other two notions are too inherently bound to Judeo-Christian religious thought, founded on the existence of an omnipotent God. Reconciliation is thus a worldly matter and a political charge. It is based on *amor mundi*, the love of the world, and the will of co-existence, which Arendt elaborates in her opus magnum *The Human Condition*. For the sake of the love of the world, one must accept the world as it is, even though it might be filled with ungraspable evil—this is the challenge of reconciliation. In her *Denktagebuch*, Arendt returns to the concept of reconciliation at several points and, in relation to *amor mundi*, she asks why it is so difficult to love the world? Roger Berkowitz writes: “[T]he answer is clear enough: anti-Semitism, racism, totalitarianism, poverty, corruption, and a feeling of

1 Jean Axelrad Cahan, “Reconciliation or Reconstruction? Further Thoughts on Political Forgiveness,” *Polity* 45, no. 2 (April 2013): 174–97.

utter powerlessness to make change. What reconciliation and understanding require is a commitment to politics and plurality that can come about only through a dedication to the world as it is.”² The concept appeared in her thinking in the aftermath of the Second World War, in what seems to be a direct response to the Holocaust. The question of how to live in a world where such a horror could take place illuminates the limits of reconciliation. Can the world be shared, can the common be found, after such a rift? Can the people who carried out and supported the Holocaust, or the event as such, be reconciled with? Returning, once more, to the words of Berkowitz: “[I]f they would admit their error, she could make the effort to live with them in a common world,” since “reconciliation names the power to face up to the wrongs of the world and still commit oneself to living with them in a political community.”³ The Nazi crime thus shakes the very foundation of what can be perceived as the common world, and not only make relevant the question of commemoration, but also that of responsibility. By the admission of a wrong, the common might be reinstated. Yet, if considered in a broader sense, one must ask what such an admission would entail? What kind of excuse is really sufficient? The answer must be: none. Yet, just by trying, one step towards reconciliation might be taken.

Arendt’s concept of reconciliation has recently received substantial attention with respect to how, after 1950, she related to her former lover and philosophical colleague Martin Heidegger. She who spent a great part of her life thinking and working through totalitarian systems, whose life was formed by her exile in the U.S., and he who not only remained in Germany but also both benefited from and to some extent supported Nazi rule. Was Arendt able to reconcile Heidegger’s appalling position and thus able to sustain their friendship until her death in 1975? And if so, *how*? In the genealogy of Arendt’s terms, however, the ethics of reconciliation cannot be understood without considering the broader context of the trial of Adolf Eichmann. One might even argue that what she writes about Eichmann can be transposed to her silence regarding Heidegger’s ties to Nazi ideology, and the subsequent

2 Roger Berkowitz, “Reconciling Oneself to the Impossibility of Reconciliation: Arendt’s Judgement of Adolf Eichmann,” *Journal for Political Thinking* 6, no. 1/2 (November 2017): 30.

3 Ibid.

absence of a public renunciation from him. Thus, a reading of the Eichmann trial might offer an entry point into Arendt’s philosophical views on reconciliation, and thus serve as a means through which to better understand her choice not to confront Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazis.

Arendt was present during Eichmann’s trial in 1961, commissioned to write about it for *The New Yorker*. While witnessing the trial, it was through Eichmann’s unwillingness to admit any sort of wrongdoing that she exhumes all possibilities for reconciliation. She saw the political charge of the trial as removing the question of punishment beyond the realm of the law. Yet, there is a possibility of denying reconciliation altogether, to say that there is no way to reconcile with a crime so vast, especially if no guilt is admitted. Or, in Arendt’s own words from her *Denktagebuch*: “Reconciliation has a merciless boundary [that] forgiveness and revenge don’t recognize—namely, at that about which one must say: This ought not to have happened.”⁴ As the Holocaust ought not to have happened at all, and as the world still must go on despite it having happened, reconciliation might have been the only way to continue to live in love of the world. Yet, since Eichmann claims he only acted within the given laws of the Nazi rule and therefore assumes no guilt, reconciliation is rendered impossible in this particular case. In consequence, this motivates his punishment. Berkowitz again: “Eichmann must die [...] because something happened in Germany to which we, as human beings, cannot be reconciled.”⁵ This line of thought comes from Arendt’s own conclusions (also quoted by Berkowitz) and is especially important considering that Arendt insisted her book on the trial was a report without “ideas,” only “facts with a few conclusions”—besides the epilogue, wherein she writes:

You admitted that the crime committed against the Jewish people during the war was the greatest crime in recorded history, and you admitted your role in it. [...] We are concerned here only with what you did, and not

4 The quote comes from Hannah Arendt’s *Denktagebuch*, ed. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann (München: Piper Verlag), 2003; the English translation is taken from Berkowitz, “Reconciling Oneself to the Impossibility of Reconciliation,” 31.

5 Ibid.

with the possible noncriminal nature of your inner life and of your motives. [...] Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it was nothing more than misfortune that made you a willing instrument in the organization of mass murder; there still remains the fact that you have carried out, and therefore actively supported, a policy of mass murder. For politics is not like the nursery; in politics obedience and support are the same. And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations... we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang.⁶

She reaches this conclusion after monitoring the trial for weeks, looking at and thinking about Eichmann and his role in the genocide. Her verdict is without pardon, and should be read against the backdrop of *amor mundi*. That is, it is precisely because the world ought to be common that it cannot be shared with his. Yet, to understand the depth of such a claim and unravel her view on reconciliation, which is bound to both *judgment* and *thoughtlessness*, one needs to return to her general account of the trial—which is what leads up to the concluding remark quoted above.

Arendt begins her book by describing the courtroom and the circumstances of the trial: who sits where, how the language issues are dealt with, and how the court is ordered to rise before the judges enter. She points out that the building *Beth Ha'am* [The House of the People], was remodeled for the trial by someone with “a theater in mind, complete with orchestra and gallery, with proscenium and stage, and with side doors for the actors’ entrances.”⁷ She argues that the Israeli Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, wanted a show trial and that this was evident even in the choice of space.⁸ He had a pronounced goal for the Eichmann trial, to educate the Israeli youth about the Holocaust. The choice to locate the trial in Israel was not

6 Arendt, “Holes of Oblivion”: The Eichmann Trial and Totalitarianism. From a Letter to Mary McCarthy,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 389.

7 Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 4.

8 Ibid.

only symbolic but crucial to both the defense and the prosecution. In his first statement, Eichmann’s defense attorney, Dr. Servatius, objected that the court could not be unbiased, on the grounds of the judges’ identity as Jewish, since it was likely, he argued, that “one of the judges himself or a near relative of his was harmed by the acts brought forward in the charges.”⁹ Thus from the outset the issues of forgiveness, revenge, and reconciliation were already on the table.

The public interest and media coverage of the Eichmann trial were huge, and the trial was highly symbolic for the Israeli state, since it was the first time Israel tried a Nazi criminal. SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann was head of the Department for Jewish Affairs in the Gestapo from 1941 to 1945. He was in charge of organizing the practical aspects of the deportation of European Jews from their homes to extermination camps, attending to such details as scheduling the trains that delivered people to the camps. In May 1960, Adolf Eichmann, or Ricardo Klement, as he called himself in Argentina, was kidnapped by the Israeli secret services and brought to Israel to stand trial for war crimes committed during WWII. In April 1961, Eichmann was indicted on fifteen criminal charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people, and war crimes. He pleaded “not guilty in the sense of the indictment” to each charge.¹⁰ Eichmann was sentenced to death and executed in May 1962 at Ramleh Prison. He took no responsibility for his actions (for what he was accused of) and thus did not belong in the shared world. As mentioned, his part in the Holocaust precluded the possibility of reconciliation, and meant that he had to be executed.

Arendt writes that the “case was built on what the Jews had suffered, not on what Eichmann had done.”¹¹ The trial not only convicted Eichmann, but it also provided a platform for witness accounts about the Holocaust and a framework to understand how and why such an event could take place. And it has become emblematic for various other reasons: it was the only time Israel convicted a high-ranking Nazi, it was

9 State of Israel, Ministry of Justice, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Session 1: Reading of the Indictment, Preliminary Objections by Counsel for the Defense, Reply by Attorney General to the Preliminary Objections*.

10 Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 21.

11 Ibid., 6.

the first time that survivors publicly testified, and the entire trial was videotaped and broadcast on both television and radio around the world.¹² As mentioned, the question of whether the deeds of Eichmann (implying the entire Nazi crime) could be reconciled with plays out in relation to the consequential question of legality. The defense claimed that Eichmann did not do anything unlawful within the framework of the Third Reich. And Arendt describes Eichmann as seeing himself as a law-abiding citizen: he not only obeyed orders but also the law, and thus he acted as if he was the legislator of the laws he obeyed.¹³ This portrayal of Eichmann conveys his obedience to Nazi law as absolute, as a fundamental issue on his part. Like a Kafkaesque figure, he stands before the law with no other choice than to obey—however, he seems to have lacked Josef K’s determination to take control over his own life.

Eichmann is not freed from responsibility by Arendt. Rather, her work suggests that the concept of responsibility needs to be redefined and removed from the realm of a physical act to include the direct ordering of an act or indirectly giving permission. In one sense, Eichmann was tried for the consequences of his actions, not for a bureaucratic act of signing documents or the concrete act of giving orders. A redefinition would then have to account for a responsibility not only in terms of lawfulness, but also in an Arendtian sense of a criminal who has taken “upon himself the responsibility of an act whose consequences now determine his fate.”¹⁴ In her

12 The trial’s aftermath has also been marked by contention. Two years after the trial, Arendt published an account of it in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, and in so doing forever damaged her relationship with the international community of Jews in exile and established her image as the controversial thinker she would be remembered as.

13 She draws a parallel to the Kantian figure of a law as law without exception, and this can be understood as what she has accounted for in her writings on totalitarianism: the erasing of difference between law and ethics in the Nazi system. Arendt describes Nazi law as treating the whole world as under its jurisdiction and thus “a law which already supposedly existed before everyone.” See Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 5–6, as well as *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Inc, 1973), 394, 416.

14 Arendt, “The Perplexities of the Right of Man,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, 43.

15 After attending the Eichmann trial, Arendt became interested in the notion of thinking, and her understanding of Eichmann as thoughtless is crucial in her understanding of his inability to judge. She describes thinking, willing, and judging as the three basic mental activities, and even though they are different they cannot be separated from one another—since Eichmann neither can think nor assume responsibility for his actions. See Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1978), 6, 69.

account, Eichmann is ascribed a lack of judgment, in the sense of an inter-human responsibility, not only as it concerns the trespassing of legal boundaries.¹⁵ Thus, the lack of responsibility on Eichmann’s part might make forgiveness impossible and also prevent reconciliation.

Now, even though Heidegger did not commit a crime, he falls under the same ethical conceptions in terms of judgment and responsibility. He did not enable the genocide, but nonetheless profited from the unraveling political situation in Germany at the time. This, however, has had one effect regarding the question of how to confront him then: his Nazi involvement was commonly downplayed and treated as if he only chose *not* to decline a promotion given by the Nazis when he assumed the position of rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933. Yet, since the release of the *Black Notebooks* in 2014 (in which he emphasizes classical anti-Semitic tropes, such as the labeling of a “world Jewry” or referring to the hustling skills of Jews in general), there can be no more assumption that Heidegger acted out of mere professional opportunism. Regarding Arendt’s own role in this constellation, she has often been depicted as the abused woman in a heterosexual relationship who could not speak up; that her silence could be explained through her own words as she craved “his protection for her soul.”¹⁶ These interpretations risk relegating Arendt’s thinking and attitude towards Heidegger’s anti-Semitism to an inability to defend against patriarchal structures, or a simple characterization that she was *blinded by love*.¹⁷ As we all know, it is not easy to negotiate matters of love and politics, ethical judgments, and personal actions. And maybe it is not essential or possible here to try to pin down what Arendt might have really thought or felt. Rather, I want to propose that what she writes about Eichmann can be extended to Heidegger because he also refused to bear responsibility for his ideology and actions. Ethically, this judgment could apply to anyone else who doesn’t assume responsibility for their own deeds. Thus, what is at the core is a question of ethics. Yet, regarding Eichmann and Heidegger it is also a matter of the shared historical situation, even if one was a committed enabler of the Holocaust

16 Daniel Maier-Katkin and Birgit Maier-Katkin, “Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger: Calumny and the Politics of Reconciliation,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (February 2006): 90.

17 Ibid.

and the other a mere bystander—albeit one who formulated a complex philosophy steeped in convictions of Aryan supremacy. He stood watching while not only her actual world fell apart but also that fundamental ethical stance which cannot be a *part* of her world (in the sense of the shared): *amor mundi*.

Eichmann was part of the machinery that made the genocide possible. The crime as such is a modern crime, and the Holocaust has become the *nomos* of the modern, in Agamben's words.¹⁸ This leads to possible distance between the bureaucrat giving an order and the act as such: the perpetrator can avoid being a witness to his own crime. He becomes a remote witness, dissociated from the very event he should testify to. While the trial posits Eichmann as a leading character, he is in this sense neither a witness to the event as such, nor does he have sufficient testimony to give about it—rather, what the remote witness testifies to is the machinery enabling the genocide in the first place. He does not, and cannot, account for what happened, but only for how it was carried out. In a sense, an understanding of the perpetrator is at stake, since the idea of a crime implies not only an illegal act, but having blood on one's hands in a literal sense.¹⁹ For Eichmann, the murderous act was committed at a distance; he did not even order anyone's murder, but solely organized the deportation of people to the camps. He is a typical figure of modern society, someone just doing his job; anyone could have replaced him. This seems to shed light upon an important aspect of the trial, recognized by Arendt: it is the Nazi policies as such that were really on trial. Here, another parallel to Heidegger emerges. In comparison to Eichmann, he might have been a bystander, but this does not at all mean that he did not contribute to the anti-Semitic policies instated by the Nazis—he was a cog in the wheel of the bureaucratic machinery that began to “cleanse” higher education of Jewish students and faculty. Furthermore, his anti-Semitic ideology lasted way beyond this short institutional episode in the early 1930s.

As discussed, neither could the crime committed by the Nazis be reconciled with, nor could Eichmann as an individual. That is, through its non-reconcilability does the crime appear

18 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 25–6.

19 This is also true for the Holocaust in a more general sense, since the perpetrators systematically gave criminal orders that the victims had to carry out.

as something that should not have happened. Eichmann's particular crime and Nazi rule in general are by definition irreconcilable with a civilized world—the very world that Arendt struggles to love. Berkowitz makes the important remark that it is not that the Holocaust should be forgotten, but rather that “the world in which Eichmann's crimes could and did happen must simply be said no to.” This leads to the conclusion that “Arendt condemns Eichmann to be banished from the earth.”²⁰ Hence, he, or someone like him, cannot be included in the common. Reconciliation thus demarcates the borders of the political: those who are irreconcilable are excluded from this realm. However, this is not a question of *bare life*, of an inclusive exclusion; it rather seems as an exclusion from the world as such. Or, in other words, if *amor mundi* designates the world we share, and reconciliation is held as its political judgment, that which cannot be included or judged within those default parameters is posed outside. “Therefore he must hang,” as Arendt writes, since there is no other possibility than death. For how could one, as a human, otherwise live in this world?

Yet, can this shared world in which an Eichmann cannot be accepted accommodate someone like Heidegger? How does one reply to such a question without returning to the easy escape of Arendt being *blinded by love*? As stated, this is not where I want to go. But maybe there is something in the question of being *able to see* versus *blindness*. Based on her writing on Eichmann, Arendt was criticized for doing the Zionist cause a disservice, but also praised for her *clarity of vision* in the same context. She *saw* the structures enabling the genocide, the role of the Jewish councils, the composition of Eichmann's argument of innocence. Why then does her gaze seem so obscured in relation to Heidegger? Despite her argument that it is impossible to reconcile with any Nazi, or any Nazi sympathizers, with Heidegger she seems to permit this as a possibility. For her, revenge, forgiveness, and reconciliation are bound to a transgression that needs to be responded to ethically, but reconciliation remains the one concept that is important in a political sense. She writes: “[L]ove, although it is one of the rarest occurrences in human lives [...] is unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with

20 Berkowitz, “Reconciling Oneself to the Impossibility of Reconciliation,” 32.

what the loved person may be, with his qualities and shortcomings, [...] achievements, failings, and transgressions.”²¹ So could it be love that differentiates Heidegger from Eichmann, since love itself transgresses the sense of worldliness? The love she speaks of need not be the romantic kind, *the one that blinds*; it can also be the love in the love of the world, *amor mundi*. However, it also seems as though love—their personal intimacy—is what places her relation to Heidegger outside of the *amor mundi*, as the different types of love gesture in opposite directions—one pointing to the common, and the other, romantic love, clearly pointing to something that is *not* widely shared. Still, it is decidedly not a question of *not seeing*, of being blinded—Arendt seems to *see* clearly—but rather a question of whom one reconciles with, and how. One might ask what this does to her ethical position: did this intimacy allow Arendt to look beyond Heidegger’s deeds and views? Importantly, Arendt did not know what was written in Heidegger’s notebooks, as they remained unpublished until after her death. Nevertheless, in the Eichmann trial, what is shared by the main actors, the prosecutor, the judges, the defense, the witnesses, and the perpetrator is their public standing. It is a matter of doing and acting within a shared society, of living in and with history—the trial itself was a public event. What the quote above may amount to is that Heidegger’s place, in relation to Arendt, lies outside of the public sphere. Regardless of his status as a public philosopher, their relation was a private, personal one. Here, a possible answer of why Arendt did not break with him emerges: reconciliation is, as I stated at the beginning of this text, what enables a *political* judgment, bound to the construction and maintenance of a shared humanity. Reconciliation is without affect, as it is placed in the sphere of politics, and thus fundamentally contradicts the basis of personal love and friendship. However, for Arendt, an intimate relation seems to defy any evaluation by those standards. Reconciliation might be reserved for that which cannot be forgiven politically, but in terms of friendships and love affairs, it is reconciliation that cannot be.

21 Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 242. This quote is often discussed in relation to this matter; see, for example, Maier-Katkin and Maier-Katkin, “Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger,” 117.

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The World as a Philosophical Object

Whoever wants to reflect on a philosophical object must mark it off from other things. Without delimiting its thought-object, reflection, like philosophical conversation, easily gets lost in the indeterminate. You go off track and may even end up talking about anything and everything. To avoid this, you need to have a clear idea of the topic to be deliberated on. Such an idea may be expressed by an explicit question or initially remain unspoken and only gradually reveal its contours. A problem conceived at the outset could, at the end of a thought process, prove incomplete. Sometimes you even realize that the initial idea was fundamentally in need of revision. Yet, this can only be determined if the idea appears clearly in front of your eyes and can be put into words. But what happens to such hermeneutic precautions when it comes to an object like the world?

If one defines the world in a metaphysical sense as the totality of all that exists, then it cannot be delimited or apprehended in a conventional sense. In any case, it cannot be conceived along the lines of an object given in space and time. This is because the idea of such an object can always be supplanted by the larger idea of an object with greater dimensions and a longer lifespan. The infinite cannot be fixed by the mind's eye. Neither can a world defined as an ontological allness be distinguished from other things. Because, strictly speaking, every object of comparison would not be a different thing, but part of that world. Although one can generally distinguish a part from the whole to which it belongs, when it comes to the world, a part that is independent or separated from the whole is inconceivable. It therefore seems justified to doubt that the world can be understood as a whole composed of individual parts.

The notion of totality leads thought to its limits. Usually, we extrapolate an object's meaning from the context, in which we encounter it. Yet, a world understood as the totality of all that exists is ultimately a senseless idea. Because if the world encompasses everything there is, including thinking about the world, there cannot be a context that is more encompassing

78 and give meaning to the whole. If there were a context that was more encompassing, the world would not be what it should be according to its metaphysical definition. The existence of such a context is therefore logically impossible. If one furthermore assumes that not only the meaning, but also the existence of an object depends on the possibility to situate it within a context and, at the same time, make meaningful statements about this object, then one arrives at the conclusion that the world as such does not exist at all.¹

An Impossible Dedication

The metaphysical idea of the world and the ontological problems connected to this idea were admittedly incidental to Hannah Arendt's thought. In the prologue to *The Human Condition*, she writes:

In 1957, an earth-born object made by man was launched into the universe, where for some weeks it circled the earth according to the same laws of gravitation that swing and keep in motion the celestial bodies—the sun, the moon, and the stars. To be sure, the man-made satellite was no moon or star, no heavenly body which could follow its circling path for a time span that to us mortals, bound by earthly time, lasts from eternity to eternity. Yet, for a time it managed to stay in the skies; it dwelt and moved in the proximity of the heavenly bodies as though it had been admitted tentatively to their sublime company.²

Space travel and distant galaxies have inspired people time and again to metaphysical speculation. The question of how far human beings can advance into the universe leads to the question of the limits of outer space, and from there thought is not far from the idea of the totality of all that exists.

Yet the word “world,” rather than merely designating this totality, can be defined more precisely. A world can be delimited and used in the plural form, and it is no coincidence that

1 Markus Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

2 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.

79 Arendt refers to this usage right at the beginning of *The Human Condition*. The world can also be understood as a “human-made world,” referring to the buildings, cities, and countries of this earth, where people live. It also refers to the social and political contexts in which we operate. It is this world, and not the metaphysical idea of totality, that Hannah Arendt focuses on. In Arendt's thought, the rejection of a metaphysical conception of the world and the theoretical turn towards the significative contexts that structure human life are unmistakably influenced by Heidegger's existential hermeneutics. To be sure, in her exploration of the world, Hannah Arendt emphasizes different aspects than Heidegger. This is particularly true for her historically saturated musings on the constitution of the world of work, society, and political action. But Arendt was aware that it was not only her conception of world, but also her understanding of politics that was influenced by the existential category of concern (*Sorge*), which Heidegger had established as the meaning of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. Politics, according to Arendt, is first and foremost “concern for the world.”³ The “space of appearance,” which for Arendt is an indispensable condition for political action, may thus be read as an extension of Heidegger's conception of “*Dasein*'s spatiality.”⁴ In both cases, it is a spatiality created by the day-to-day life of individuals, by the play of proximity and distance in relation to things and to other people.⁵

In this context, Hannah Arendt shows an extraordinary degree of intellectual integrity. In no way does she try to downplay Heidegger's influence on her thinking. On 28 October 1960, on the occasion of the publication of the German version of *The Human Condition*, she writes a letter to Heidegger:

You will see that the book does not contain a dedication. If things had ever worked out properly between us—and I mean between, that is, neither you nor me—I would have asked you if I might dedicate it to you; it came directly

3 Cf. Ole Meinefeld, “Von der Zeitlichkeit zum öffentlichen Raum: Politik als ‘Sorge um die Welt,’” in *Raum und Zeit: Denkformen des Politischen bei Hannah Arendt*, eds. Karlfriedrich Herb, Mareike Gebhardt, and Kathrin Morgenstern (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2014), 107–34.

4 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 207–12.

5 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 138–48.

out of the first Freiburg days and hence owes practically everything to you in every respect. As things are, I did not think it was possible, but I wanted to mention the bare facts to you in one way or another.⁶

At first glance, the explanation for the omitted dedication seems plausible. But it is worth taking a closer look. What does Arendt actually mean with her statement that it never “worked out properly between” Heidegger and herself? And why this emphasis on the “between,” which puts the responsibility for the ambivalent relationship with her first academic teacher into a strange limbo?

There are at least three possible answers to the first of the two questions. Firstly, given the tragic nature of her love affair with Heidegger, Arendt may have refrained from making a dedication to Heidegger for personal reasons and a sense of tact. Secondly, Arendt could have taken this step because she was upset that Heidegger had not sufficiently acknowledged and appreciated her own intellectual achievements. And thirdly, her knowledge of Heidegger’s participation in the higher education policy of the National Socialists and his appropriations of Nazi ideology in the 1930s could ultimately have prevented her from making such a dedication. In order to assess these three possible answers, further documents must be consulted. This will also shed some light on the mysterious “between,” to which Arendt attaches special importance, culminating in the question of what it actually means to share a world.

A Banal Affair

The interpretation that Arendt refused to dedicate *The Human Condition* to Heidegger because of their love affair is contradicted by the sovereign manner in which, in the 1950s and 1960s, she looks back on the amorous entanglements of her student years. In 1960, the end of the romantic relationship dates back more than thirty years. After meeting Heidegger again in February 1950, Arendt talked things out with Heidegger and his

6 Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, “Letter 89, from 28 October 1960,” in *Letters 1925–1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (New York: Harcourt, 2004), 123–4.

wife Elfride and they cultivated a largely friendly relationship. Immediately after speaking with the Heideggers about the past events, Arendt, as her letters reveal, takes a slightly mocking and barely sentimental perspective on the past. On 10 February 1950, two days after speaking with the Heideggers, she writes the following lines to her friend Hilde Fränkel in New York:

In any case, H[eidegger] almost immediately appeared in the hotel and began to perform a kind of tragedy, in which I presumably participated in the first two acts. He in no way took into account that all this happened twenty-five years ago and that he hadn’t seen me for more than seventeen years. He can only be described as like a dog with his tail between its legs (that is to say: guilty). [...] In addition there was a surreal scene with his wife who, in her agitation, was always saying “your husband”, when she should have said “my husband.” And the things that came gushing out, things that I had neither known nor suspected—she knew what he owed me in connection with his philosophical production, etc., this, in between reproaches, toward him, about his lack of fidelity. Clearly, an often repeated scene. [...] I will tell you more about this veritable novel in its latest developments when I’m back.⁷

Whether things really happened the way Arendt describes them here is secondary. Speculation may satisfy some kind of biographical voyeurism. The following is not intended as a detailed commentary on such private statements. What is more important is that this letter documents something that is easily overlooked: the love affair that took place between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger in the 1920s is, in essence, interchangeable and completely banal. That the eroticism of a pedagogical relationship can turn into a romantic love relationship is a well-known and by no means incidental trope of European literature. One need only recall Professor

7 Arendt, quoted in *Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger: History of a Love* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2017), 201.

82 Serebryakov and the beautiful Yelena in *Uncle Vanya*. Arendt's mocking detachment might also signify an awareness of the stereotypical pattern of their relationship. However, what is not banal, but important for the development of both thinkers, Arendt and Heidegger, is the intellectual exchange and mutual inspiration that went far beyond the end of the love relationship. It is in this spirit that Arendt writes to Heidegger, on 9 February 1950 from Wiesbaden, about their reunion:

This evening and this morning is the confirmation of an entire life. A confirmation that, when it comes down to it, was never expected. When the waiter spoke your name (I had not actually expected you, had not received your letter, after all), it was as if time suddenly stood still. Then all at once I became aware of something that I would not have confessed before, neither to myself nor to you nor to anyone—how after Friedrich had given me the address, the force of the impulse had mercifully saved me from committing the only really inexcusable act of infidelity and of forfeiting my life. But one thing you should know (as we have had relatively little to do with each other, after all, and that not as openly as we might have), if I had done it, then it would have been out of pride, that is, sheer crazy stupidity. Not for reasons.⁸

→ p. 103

Arendt's use of the expression "inexcusable act of infidelity" shows that the moral question concerning the retrospective evaluation of the extramarital affair is of no interest to her. For her, the meeting is rather a "confirmation," because she cannot and does not want to disavow Heidegger's lasting intellectual influence. Even though Heidegger supported the Nazi regime that forced her into exile, the exploration of his philosophy is an indispensable aspect of Arendt's life and identity; and as she is both able and willing to endure this contradiction, she sees the reunion as a "confirmation of an entire life." This sovereignty is also evident in Arendt's letter to Elfride Heidegger from 10 February 1950. In it, she writes that Elfride did not expect an apology for the past relationship and that Arendt, in any case,

8 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 48, from 9 February 1950," in *Letters*, 59–60.

would not be able to offer one. What stood between them was not the affair but Elfride's anti-Semitism, which made an open "conversation almost impossible."⁹ Arendt points out that there can be no fruitful discussion if the interlocutors' respective statements are always reduced to the expression of group affiliation ("Jewish, German, Chinese"), which she encapsulates in a concise formula: "The *argumentum ad hominem* ends all communication, because it includes something outside the freedom of the individual."¹⁰ The correspondence between Arendt and Martin Heidegger testifies to the fact that Arendt did not feel this restriction when communicating with him; at least not to the same extent as with Elfride. This is also supported by a note in Hannah Arendt's estate, kept together with a copy of the quoted letter to Heidegger from 28 October 1960, describing the omission of the dedication as follows:

83

→ p. 105

→ p. 105–6

Re The Human Condition:

The dedication of this book is omitted.

How could I dedicate it to you,

Trusted one,

Whom I was faithful

And not faithful to

And both with love.¹¹

In the tension between fidelity and infidelity, Arendt expresses the multi-layered ambivalence of her relation to Heidegger. In her view, this ambivalence is obviously not primarily rooted in their personal relationship—Heidegger is described as a "trusted one"—and even the infidelity emerges from a fundamentally affectionate attitude. The failed love affair from her student days is therefore not the main reason behind the omission of the dedication.

9 Ibid., "Letter 49, from 10 February 1950," in *Letters*, 61–62.

10 Ibid., 62.

11 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 89, from 28 October 1960," in *Letters*, 319.

The reunion with Hannah Arendt and the friendship that developed over the following two decades were not only of personal importance to Heidegger. He also found the written exchange with Arendt inspiring and appreciated her judgment in philosophical questions as well as in practical matters. At the same time it is striking that the correspondence is primarily shaped by themes from his work. Heidegger seems to take only marginal note of Arendt's important historical and theoretical works published during this period. Against this background, it is reasonable to assume that Arendt had refused to dedicate *The Human Condition* because she was vexed by the lack of interest and appreciation for her work. This is indicated in a letter to Karl Jaspers, written one year after the letter to Heidegger about the omitted dedication:

I know that he finds it intolerable that my name appears in public, that I write books, etc. All my life I've pulled the wool over his eyes, so to speak, always acted as if none of that existed and as if I couldn't count to three, unless it was in the interpretation of his own works. Then he was always very pleased when it turned out that I could count to three and sometimes even to four. Then I suddenly felt this deception was becoming too boring, and so I got a rap on the nose. I was very angry for a moment, but I'm not any longer. I feel instead that I somehow deserved what I got—that is, both for having deceived him and for suddenly having put an end to it.¹²

It is indeed not documented whether Heidegger ever seriously engaged with the writings that made Arendt famous. Characteristic for his attitude is the way he thanks Arendt for sending him a copy of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: “We thank you for your book, which, with my poor English skills, I won't be able to read. Elfride will be very interested in it.”¹³ Since Arendt was aware of Elfride Heidegger's anti-Semitic resentment, Heidegger's remark

12 Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence, 1926–1969*, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt, 1992), 457.

13 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 74, from 14 July 1951,” in *Letters*, 105.

that his wife would be interested in the book would have been scant consolation for the philosopher's lack of interest. A statement from Heidegger on Arendt's analysis of the emergence of totalitarian systems of government would have not only been an important personal recognition of Arendt's work, but also in the public interest. Heidegger never publicly expressed himself in any detail about his participation in National Socialist university politics and his later distancing from Nazi ideology.

Elsewhere in the exchange of letters, it becomes clear what Arendt means by “deceiving him,” which she uses in her letter to Jaspers to describe the fact that she belittled her own works in front of Heidegger. For example, thanking Heidegger for sending her “The Question Concerning Technology,” she writes: “I am very glad I will receive the technology lecture. I will, I think, use it for a presentation at the [Annual Conference of the American] Political Science Association in September.”¹⁴ She does not say at this point what she will talk about during her congress lecture. Moreover, she describes her own lecture, with much understatement, as a “presentation.” And lastly, she gives Heidegger the impression that she is intellectually dependent on him for her work on a small text.

Reading the older letters from the 1920s, written during Heidegger and Arendt's love affair, of which only a few have survived, it becomes clear that Arendt's symbolic submission to Heidegger—which from today's perspective has something obsessive about it—corresponds to the gender stereotypes of the time. On 10 February 1925, for instance, in the oldest surviving letter, Heidegger writes to Arendt that only men could endure the “terrible solitude of academic research.”¹⁵ Heidegger makes an explicit distinction here between the academic work that women and the academic work that men are capable of. During their studies, women always had to preserve their “womanly essence.”¹⁶ This essence, he writes eleven days later, was “unending womanly giving.”¹⁷ In the following, he contrasts this womanly essence with the essence of men: “May masculine inquiry learn what respect is from simple devotion; may one-sided activity learn breadth from the original unity of

14 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 86, from 8 May 1954,” in *Letters*, 122.

15 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 1, from 10 February 1925,” in *Letters*, 3.

16 *Ibid.*, 4.

17 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 2, from 21 February 1925,” in *Letters*, 5.

womanly Being.”¹⁸ This idea is not only heteronormative, but also implies an image of women that was already problematic in the 1920s. Learning and knowledge progress are situated in a man’s confrontation with the essence of woman. The reverse thought process, in which a woman could learn something from the “essence of man” through an experience of difference, is not taken into account at all. Admittedly, these letters were written thirty-five years before Arendt refused to dedicate *The Human Condition*, yet in personal relationships the circumstances under which two people meet may continue to resonate for a long time. In this sense, Arendt’s withholding of the dedication can be seen as an emancipatory act, through which she takes leave of “unending womanly giving.” But perhaps it is also a leave-taking in another sense. By foregoing the dedication, Arendt departs from the role of disciple within an asymmetric power relation, which can be traced throughout her correspondence with Heidegger. Derrida very astutely described how difficult such a separation is:

Now, the disciple’s consciousness, when he starts, I would not say to dispute, but to engage in dialogue with the master or, better, to articulate the interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple—the disciple’s consciousness is an unhappy consciousness. Starting to enter into dialogue in the world, that is, starting to answer back, he always feels “caught in the act,” like the “infant” who, by definition and as his name indicates, cannot speak and above all must not answer back. [...] He feels himself indefinitely challenged, or rejected or accused; as a disciple, he is challenged by the master who speaks within him and before him, to reproach him for making this challenge and to reject it in advance, having elaborated it before him; and having interiorized the master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is. This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know—or is still concealing from himself—that the master, like real life, may always be absent.¹⁹

By withholding the dedication, Hannah Arendt also suspends the disciple’s unhappy consciousness. She has found her own voice, recognizing that Heidegger may have influenced the genesis of her thought, but, despite the continued correspondence, ultimately remained absent in the elaboration of her own theories.

Guilt and Reconciliation

The missing dedication in *The Human Condition* is thus an expression of the author’s intellectual independence. But there is a more important reason why Arendt was unable to preface the book with a dedication to Heidegger. It is a political question, involving her relationship with him. In his last surviving letter to Arendt before Hitler seized power, Heidegger still denounced the assertion that he was an anti-Semite as “slanders.”²⁰ It was during this time that their contact broke off. Only a little later, Heidegger made himself guilty through his positions and activities within the higher education system of Nazi Germany, as well as his attempts to intellectually appropriate Nazi ideology, philosophically legitimizing it in an idiosyncratic manner. This guilt weighs more heavily than his anti-Semitic resentment, the extent of which is still being debated by Heidegger’s biographers today. It is the public partisanship and the political acts that speak for themselves, and which Arendt could not have overlooked. Yet, she probably didn’t even know for how long racist stereotypes persisted in Heidegger’s thinking.

In 1946, Heidegger wrote about the failed Nazi state in one of his black notebooks:

Is not the failure to acknowledge this destiny (the destiny of the German people), and repressing our will for the world, a “fault,” and an even more essential “collective guilt” whose enormity cannot be measured against the horror of the “gas chambers,” a guilt more terrible than all the officially censurable “crimes,” for which no one will apologise in future? It can already be perceived that the German people and German territory are a

single concentration camp such as “the world” has never “seen” and never wants to see, a not wanting much more willed and consensual than our *absence of will* in the face of the *feralisation* of national socialism.”²¹

It is disturbing to read how Heidegger relativizes the Holocaust in this passage. The pseudo-philosophical interpretation of National Socialism as a “will for the world” and “destiny,” as well as the implicit assertion the Allied occupation was worse than the crimes committed in the Third Reich, precludes a serious analysis of the industrial mass murder in the concentration camps. Even if he may not have been aware of this, such relativizing comparisons are nothing more than a blatantly obvious expression of anti-Semitism.

When it came to judging Heidegger’s guilt under National Socialism, Arendt was exceptionally lenient. In a radio lecture, given on the occasion of Heidegger’s eightieth birthday, which she sent him in a letter, she compares his political errors and his poor political judgment with Plato’s failed trips to Syracuse. Almost all great thinkers—with the exception of Kant, the enlightener—had a “**tendency to the tyrannical.**” And for her as a political theorist, delivering a *laudatio* in Heidegger’s honour, this posed a particular problem: “**We who want to honour thinkers, even if our residence is in the middle of the world, can hardly help but find it striking and perhaps even irritating that when they got involved in human affairs, both Plato and Heidegger resorted to tyrants and führers.**”²² In the end, however, Arendt judges this to be secondary compared with Heidegger’s philosophical merits.

21 Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I–V. Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2015), 100. Translated by Giles Watson in Donatella Di Cesare, “Heidegger—Jews Self-destructed: New Black Notebooks reveal philosopher’s shocking take on Shoah,” corriere.it/english/15_febbraio_09/heidegger-jews-self-destructed-47cd3930-b03b-11e4-8615-d0fd07eabd28.shtml. For an interpretation of the so-called “Black Notebooks” and the light they shed on Heidegger’s anti-Semitism, see David Espinet, Günter Figal, Tobias Keiling, and Nikola Mirković, eds., *Heideggers Schwarze Hefte im Kontext, Geschichte, Politik, Ideologie* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2018).

22 Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 116, from 26 September 1969,” in *Letters*, 161–2.

With great thinkers it was a matter of indifference where the storms of their centuries may blow them. For the storm that runs through Heidegger’s thought—like the one that after millennia, still blows toward us out of Plato’s work—does not come from the century. It comes from the ancient, and what it leaves behind is something consummate that, like anything consummate, reverts to the ancient.²³

One should not misconstrue Arendt’s lenient portrayal as a sign that she had “forgiven” Heidegger’s political error. In this case, Arendt is suspicious of forgiveness, as evidenced by an entry in her *Denktagebuch* (“thought diary”) from 1950. It was an “illusory process, in which one party acts in a superior fashion, while the other demands something people can neither give nor receive from each other.”²⁴ Against this background, Arendt is unable to exculpate Heidegger for his political activities in the 1930s. At the same time, she refrains from any form of revenge, like a public dissociation or a getting even. Instead, what she demonstrates in exemplary fashion in her letters and texts from the 1950s onwards, as in this *laudatio*, is a sovereign and at the same time solidary treatment of a philosopher who incurred guilt of which he could not rid himself—and which no one else could remove either. At the basis of this treatment lies the act of “reconciliation.” She describes this act as a way of “accepting” what has happened. This requires a not inconsiderable effort: “The one who seeks reconciliation simply and voluntarily loads the burden, which the other carries anyway, onto his own shoulders.”²⁵ The other’s guilt is thereby not removed, but remains. This distinguishes reconciliation from the Christian understanding of the forgiveness of sins. In a secular society, according to Arendt, it is possible to share a world, not through forgiveness or revenge, but only through reconciliation.²⁶

26 Heidegger greatly appreciated Arendt’s reflections on the difference between reconciliation, revenge, and forgiveness. On 16 May 1950, he wrote: “*You are right about reconciliation and revenge. I have been thinking about that a great deal.*” Arendt and Heidegger, “Letter 64, from 16 May 1950,” in *Letters*, 88. Arendt would later re-accentuate her reflections on reconciliation, pardon, and forgiveness, in Arendt, *The Human Condition*, § 33.

23 *Ibid.*, 162.

24 Arendt, *Denktagebuch. Erster Band 1950–1973* (München/Zürich: Piper, 2002), 3 (trans. mine).

25 *Ibid.*, 4.

90 Had Arendt prefaced *The Human Condition* with a dedication to Martin Heidegger, it would have been nothing less than an exculpatory act. Despite his influence on her thinking, she could not have dedicated a book to him that emphasizes the importance of public action and speech. It is, in other words, a question of symbolic communication, which, in this case, requires special restraint. Hitler's seizure of power and the crimes of the Nazi state did not only lead to the interruption of their personal relationship and correspondence, but also brought something "between" Arendt and Heidegger that cannot be ignored. He got involved in the world of politics, whose powers forced her into exile. The withholding of the dedication is primarily based on Arendt's consciousness of this separating "between." The fact that she communicates this to Heidegger is a sign of the "reconciliation" that occurred.

A Shared World

In her claim that she would have dedicated *The Human Condition* to Heidegger if "things had ever worked out properly between us—and I mean *between*, that is, neither you nor me," this "between" primarily refers to the space of political action. This space is determined first and foremost by the interests of people who act and speak publicly. But when people pursue their interests, their individual identities also come to the fore. Arendt calls this a "second in-between." It "is not tangible, since there are no tangible objects into which it could solidify; the process of acting and speaking can leave behind no such results and end products. But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships, indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality."²⁷ What Arendt here refers to as a "web of relationships," Heidegger calls "world." When reflecting on the world, he is also not primarily concerned with the metaphysical idea of the totality of all that exists.²⁸ The worldliness of *Dasein* is precisely constituted through the fact that other people are always already there. *Mitsein* (being-with) is part of the meaning of human existence.²⁹

27 Ibid., 183.

28 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 102.

29 Ibid., 153–69.

91 However, the people's interests may diverge to such an extent that a compromise cannot be reached. This is the case when a totalitarian system of government is established. Under such circumstances, the connecting space in-between becomes an insurmountable obstacle and the shared world is split in two. It seems reasonable to interpret Arendt's experience of exile in this way. The correspondence that arose after her reunion with Heidegger moves in the opposite direction. In the letters, a mediation between separate experiences and life journeys takes place, mixed not only with old memories, but also, after some time, with new things. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, Arendt and Heidegger engaged in an intensive exchange of ideas on literature, painting, and music (on, amongst others, Bach, Beethoven, Orff, Braque, Klee, Matisse, Hermann Broch, Matthias Claudius, Lowell Gray, Friedrich Hölderlin, Franz Kafka, Osip Mandelstam, and Georg Trakl). This, too, is an aspect of what it means to share a world.³⁰

For a human being, intellectual exchange can be of existential importance. In a letter to Heidegger from 20 March 1970, Arendt writes about the death of her husband, the most important interlocutor in her life:

Between two people, sometimes, how rarely, a world grows. It is then one's homeland; in any case, it was the only homeland we were willing to recognize. This tiny microworld where we can always escape from the world, and which disintegrates when the other has gone away. I go now and am quite calm and think: *away*.³¹

→p.111

Such a private cosmos may not only emerge in a love relationship but also in a friendship. Private life is a protected space, yet it cannot exist completely independently of the rest of the world. The "microworld" is embedded in a complex structure of interpersonal, social, and political relations. To share a world means, not least, to care about this structure—without which there is no possibility of private retreat. Political circumstances, then as now, can prevent people from talking

30 What Arendt calls the "permanence of the world" consists, not least, of works of art. Cf. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 167–74.

31 Arendt and Heidegger, "Letter 127, from 17 November 1970," in *Letters*, 173.

92 to each other. But they can also facilitate it. The conversation that subsequently ensues can certainly lead to tangible things. It is sometimes even documented in letters that exemplify what it means to share a world.

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Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger *Letters from 1925 to 1975* Selected Transcriptions

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