

MARTIN  
HEIDEGGER

*Between Good and Evil*

RÜDIGER SAFRANSKI

*Translated by Ewald Osers*

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FOR GISELA MARIA NICKLAUS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my friends who helped me  
with their sympathy, their curiosity, and their own research:  
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## PREFACE: A MASTER FROM GERMANY

Heidegger's story is a long one—whether the story of his life or of his philosophy. It covers the passions and disasters of a whole century.

In terms of philosophy, Heidegger came from a long way back. He treated Heraclitus, Plato, and Kant as if they were his contemporaries. He came so close to them he could hear and put into words what remained unuttered by them. In Heidegger we still find the whole wonderful metaphysics, albeit at the moment of its falling silent—or, to put it differently, at the moment when it opens out into something else.

Heidegger's passion was asking questions, not providing answers. That which he asked questions about and that which he was seeking, he called Being. Throughout a philosophical life he continually asked this one question about Being. The meaning of this question is nothing more and nothing less than giving back to life the mystery that threatened to disappear in the modern world.

Heidegger began as a Catholic philosopher. He accepted the challenge of the modern age. He developed the philosophy of a *Dasein* that finds itself

thrown under an empty heaven and in the power of all-devouring time, endowed with the ability to design its own life. A philosophy that addresses the individual in his freedom and responsibility and takes death seriously. The question about Being in Heidegger's sense means to release "*Dasein* the way one weighs anchor to sail out, liberated, to the open sea." It is a sad irony of the history of philosophical effect that Heidegger's question about Being has very largely lost this liberating, lightening aspect, and that, if anything, it has tended to intimidate and cramp thinking. It would be important to relax this cramp. Then, perhaps, one might also be free enough to let the laughter of the Thracian maid—who laughed when her master, the philosopher Thales of Miletus, fell into a well while gazing at the stars—reply to many a miscarried profundity of this philosophical genius.

A good deal of uneasiness persists to this day about Heidegger's political involvement. On philosophical grounds he became, for a while, a National Socialist revolutionary, but his philosophy also helped him to free himself from the political scene. He learned a lesson from what he had done, and his thinking subsequently focused on the problem of the seducibility of the spirit by the will to power. Heidegger's philosophical way leads from resoluteness, via the metaphysics, to the great historical moment, to composure at the end, and to thinking that is a provident, stewardly intercourse with the world.

Martin Heidegger—a master from Germany.

He truly was a "master" from the school of the mystic Master Eckhart. More than anyone else, he kept open the horizon for religious experience in a nonreligious age. He found a way of thinking that remains close to things and avoids a crash into banality.

He really was very "German," as German as Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn. The history of Heidegger's life and thought is, yet again, a Dr. Faustus story. What emerges is the lovable, the fascinating, and the abysmally profound element of a specifically German road in philosophy, one that was to become a European event. And finally, through his political activity he also had about him something of that "master from Germany" that Paul Celan's poem refers to.

Thus Martin Heidegger's name represents the most exciting chapter in the history of the German spirit in our century. It has to be told, the good and the evil, and beyond good and evil.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1889      September 26: birth of Martin Heidegger, son of Friedrich Heidegger (August 7, 1852–May 2, 1924), master cooper and sexton in Messkirch, and Johanna Heidegger, née Kempf (March 21, 1858–May 3, 1927).
- 1903–1906      Gymnasium in Constance on a scholarship. Accommodation in the Catholic boarding school, the Konradhaus. Preparation for a clerical career.
- 1906–1909      Gymnasium and archiepiscopal convent in Freiburg.
- 1909      Heidegger enters the novitiate with the Jesuits in Tisis near Feldkirch (Vorarlberg, Austria). Discharged on October 13 because of heart problems.
- 1909–1911      Study of theology and philosophy at Freiburg. Antimodernist articles in Catholic periodicals.
- 1911–1913      Clerical training discontinued. Study of philosophy, the humanities, and natural sciences at Freiburg. Scholarship for the study of Catholic philosophy. Friendship with Ernst Laslowski. Study of Edmund Husserl. Logic as a transcendent value of life.

- 1913 Doctorate, with a thesis on “The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologyism.”
- 1915 Habilitation (title of *Dozent*), with a dissertation on “Duns Scotus’s Doctrine of Categories and Meaning.”
- 1915–1918 Enlisted for military service (limited fitness; postal censorship and meteorological service).
- 1917 Marries Elfride Petri.
- 1919 Birth of his son Jörg.
- 1919 Break with the “system of Catholicism.”
- 1920 Birth of his son Hermann.
- 1918–1923 *Privatdozent* and assistant to Husserl in Freiburg. Friendship with Elisabeth Blochmann.
- 1920 Start of friendship with Karl Jaspers.
- 1922 Heidegger’s interpretations of Aristotle excite much attention in Marburg.
- 1923 His ontology lectures establish his reputation as the “secret king of philosophy.”
- 1923 Appointment to Marburg. Moves to his cabin at Todtnauberg. Friendship with Rudolf Bultmann.
- 1924 Beginning of love affair with Hannah Arendt.
- 1925 Arendt leaves Marburg.
- 1927 *Being and Time* published.
- 1928 Appointment to Freiburg as Husserl’s successor.
- 1929 Inaugural lecture, “What Is Metaphysics?” March: lectures in the Davos university courses. Debate with Ernst Cassirer.
- 1929–30 Lectures on “The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics.”
- 1930 First invitation to Berlin declined.
- 1931–32 New Year’s Eve at the cabin: Heidegger supports National Socialism.
- 1933 Election to rectorate. May 1: joins the Nazi Party. May 27: rectorial address. Organization of the scholarship camp. Propaganda appearances in Leipzig, Heidelberg, Tübingen. Cooperation in Baden university reform (introduction of the *führer* principle). October: second invitation to Berlin declined. Summer: last visit to Jaspers.
- 1934 Faculty squabbles and differences with governmental and party authorities result in his resignation from the rectorship in April. Summer: preparation of plans for a *Dozentenakademie* in Berlin.
- 1936 End of correspondence with Jaspers. Lecture in Zurich on “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Lecture in Rome on “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.” Meeting with Karl Löwith.
- 1936–1940 In several Nietzsche lectures Heidegger critically discusses the power thinking of National Socialism. Under surveillance by the Gestapo.
- 1936–1938 Writes his “*Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*” (Contributions to Philosophy [On the Event]), intended for later publication.
- 1937 Heidegger declines participation in the International Philosophical Congress in Paris.
- 1944 Called up for the Volkssturm (People’s Militia).
- 1945 January–February: in Messkirch to sort out and securely store his manuscripts.
- 1945 April–June: Philosophical faculty evacuated to Wildenstein Castle (near Beuron, Danube Valley). July: Heidegger before the denazification committee. Philosophically interested French occupation officers make contact with Heidegger. A planned meeting with Jean-Paul Sartre does not materialize. Correspondence with Sartre. Beginning of friendship with Jean Beaufret.
- 1946 Jaspers’s expert opinion on Heidegger presented to denazification committee. Heidegger banned from teaching (until 1949). Beginning of friendship with Medard Boss. Letter to Beaufret: *On Humanism*.
- 1949 December: four lectures to the Club zu Bremen (“The Thing,” “The Framework,” “The Danger,” “The Turn”).
- 1950 Repeated lectures at the Bühlerhöhe spa and to the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts.
- 1950 February: Arendt visits Heidegger. Their correspondence and friendship resume. Correspondence with Jaspers also resumes.
- 1951–52 Heidegger resumes his university lectures.
- 1952 Arendt’s second visit.
- 1953 Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts lecture in Munich: “The Question of Technology.” Beginning of Heidegger’s postwar career. Friendship with Erhart Kästner.

- 1955 "Gelassenheit" (Composure) address at the Conradin Kreutzer celebration in Messkirch. March 21: lecture in Cérisy-la-Salle.
- 1957 Lecture in Aix-en-Provence. Acquaintance with René Char.
- 1959 Beginning of the Zollikon Seminars with Medard Boss.
- 1959 Appointed honorary citizen of Messkirch on September 27.
- 1962 First trip to Greece.
- 1964 Theodor Adorno's pamphlet against Heidegger, *Jargon of Authenticity*, published.
- 1966 First seminar at Le Thor; continued 1968, 1969, and 1973 in Zähringen.
- 1966 The *Spiegel* interview (published after Heidegger's death).
- 1967 Arendt visits Heidegger. From then on she visits him every year.
- 1975 The first volume of his *Collected Works* appears.
- 1976 Heidegger dies on May 26 and is interred in Messkirch on May 28.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Following are the works by Heidegger cited in the text. The abbreviations shown have been used for citations from the German works and the published collections of correspondence. They follow the abbreviations used by the author in the German edition. A translation of each German title appears here in parenthesis; where a corresponding published English translation has been cited, that bibliographic information is also given.

GA 1 ff *Gesamtausgabe: Ausgabe letzter Hand* (Collected Works: Author's Final Revision), series ed. Hermann Heidegger, Frankfurt.

## INDIVIDUAL WORKS BY MARTIN HEIDEGGER

- A *Aufenthalte* (Sojourns). Frankfurt, 1989.
- BZ *Der Begriff der Zeit*. Tübingen, 1989. (*The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.)
- D *Denkerfahrungen* (Thought Experiences). Frankfurt, 1983.
- DJ *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation* (Phenomenological Interpretations to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation). In *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für*

- EH *Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften*, vol. 6. Göttingen, 1989.
- EH *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Explications of Hölderlin's Poetry). Frankfurt, 1981.
- EM *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Tübingen, 1987. (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. R. Manheim. New Haven, Conn., 1987.)
- FS *Frühe Schriften* (Early Writings). Frankfurt, 1972.
- G *Gelassenheit*. Pfullingen, 1985. (*Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*. Trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York, 1969.)
- H *Holzwege* (Wrong Paths). Frankfurt, 1950.
- HK "Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens" (The Origin of Art and the Mission of Thinking). In Petra Jaeger and Rudolf Lütke, eds., *Distanz und Nähe: Reflexionen und Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Distance and Proximity: Reflections and Analyses on Present-Day Art). Würzburg, 1983.
- K *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Frankfurt, 1991. (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. Richard Taft. Bloomington, Ind., 1990.)
- L *Logik* (Logic). Lectures, summer semester 1934, anonymous notes. Ed. Victor Farías. Madrid, 1931.
- N I, N II *Nietzsche*, 2 vols., Pfullingen, 1961. (*Nietzsche*, 4 vols. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco, 1987.)
- R *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität: Das Rektorat*. Frankfurt, 1983. ("The Self-Assertion of the German University." In Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. New York, 1991.)
- SuZ *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, 1963. (*Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco, 1962.)
- TK *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen, 1962. ("The Question Concerning Technology." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)
- ÜH *Über den Humanismus*. Frankfurt, 1981. ("Letter on Humanism." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)
- VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Lectures and Essays). Pfullingen, 1985.
- VS *Vier Seminare* (Four Seminars). Frankfurt, 1977.
- W *Wegmarken* (Track Markings). Frankfurt, 1978.
- WHD *Was heisst Denken?* Tübingen, 1984. (*What Is Called Thinking?* Trans. Fred D. Neick and J. Glenn Gray. New York, 1968.)
- WM *Was ist Metaphysik?* Frankfurt, 1986. ("What Is Metaphysics?" In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)
- WW *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Frankfurt, 1986. ("On the Essence of Truth." In David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, rev. ed. San Francisco, 1993.)
- Z *Zur Sache des Denkens* (On the Matter of Thinking). Tübingen, 1984. (*On Time and Being*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York, 1972.)
- ZS *Zollikoner Seminare* (Zollikon Seminars). Frankfurt, 1987.

## CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS BY HEIDEGGER

- BwHB Martin Heidegger and Elisabeth Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Joachim W. Storck. Marbach, 1989.
- BwHJ Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner. Frankfurt and Munich, 1990.
- BwHK Martin Heidegger and Erhart Kästner, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet. Frankfurt, 1986.
- S Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Denken* (Late Gleanings on Heidegger: Documents on His Life and Thought). Berne, 1962.

## OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

- BwAJ Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel* (Correspondence). Ed. Lotte Köhler and Hans Saner. Munich, 1985.

## OTHER ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS BY HEIDEGGER

- The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington, Ind., 1982.
- The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington, Ind., 1995.
- History of the Concept of Time, Prolegomena*. Trans. Theodore Kisiel. Bloomington, Ind., 1985.
- Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Athens, Ohio, 1995.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Heidegger literature in English, both primary and secondary, is still expanding, with hitherto untranslated works being translated, existing translations being revised and reissued, and new critical work being published both in America and in Britain. Therefore some of the more recent publications may not yet be listed in library catalogues or available to researchers. While I made every effort to verify the English texts of the numerous references in libraries on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in online catalogues, it was sometimes, because of the fluidity of the situation, unavoidable that a quotation be attributed to an edition that is not the most recent.

In-text page citations are to the German editions of Heidegger's works and correspondence. When a published English translation is quoted, the reference appears in the notes; all other translations are my own.

The gale that blows through Heidegger's thinking—like that which still, after thousands of years, blows to us from Plato's work—is not of our century. It comes from the primordial, and what it leaves behind is something perfect which, like everything perfect, falls back to the primordial.

HANNAH ARENDT

A truth must be able to depart this world, as one used to put it; otherwise it remains worldless. The world has become so barren because so many manufactured ideas are drifting around in it, placeless and imageless.

ERHART KÄSTNER

Without man, Being would be mute; it would be there, but it would not be the True one.

ALEXANDER KOJÈVE