

Black Forest Melody
**Between Philosophical Kitsch and Identitarian Ideology:
Heidegger's Pastoral World-View in the Memorial Address.
Trial on a Classification**

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Abstract:

Martin Heidegger – due to his outstanding role in 20th century philosophy, even beyond his grave the person and the philosopher are still subject to controversy discussions about his political attitudes. The question in the centre of the discussions is not if he was politically on the far right, but how far right he was, and also how far right his philosophy is. The details of Heidegger's political approaches in his work are, however, pretty much cloaked and hidden behind the so typical Heideggerian typical style of writing was not decided for so long. Within Heidegger's work, there is a short essay that may shed light on the roots and details of his ethnic-identitarian thinking: The Memorial Address.

Keywords: Heidegger, nazism, Memorial Address, Heidegger's worldview, identitarian ideology.

*We are plants which~—whether we like to admit it to ourselves or
not~—must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom
in the ether and to bear fruit.*

Johann Peter Hebel [12, p. 57]

*They always fill me with a certain horror.
It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in
London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful
countryside.*

Sherlock Holmes [8]

Among experts, Martin Heidegger's Memorial Address [12] has neither found the consideration nor the appreciation his main works have enjoyed. One reason for that may be seen in the fact that it is a small work of just 14 pages. Another reason may be seen in the circumstance that the Memorial Address is not strictly an academic text, and it was presented to average village people in the market square of Heidegger's home village.

Despite these facts, adding the Memorial Address to the complete edition of his published works was extremely valuable for it contributes to a better understanding of his political attitudes - that may have carried his philosophical work all along.

The editorial history of the Memorial Address as an insignificant public speech¹ keeps as nebulous as Heidegger's general political approaches – but both the issues have in common that there are *events* and concomitant circumstances connected to them that may bring light into the question how far Heidegger's thinking roots in an *identarian blood & soil ideology* of the past - that has returned again in present times.

As much as especially Heidegger's practical politics at academia during his time as university rector in Freiburg and the connected rector's speech [13] may explain his fundamental motivation in the early days of the Naz-regime, his philosophical work has been usually enjoying the reputation to be as unpolitical as Heidegger always had announced it to be.

The simple fact that the Memorial Address – as a public and not academic speech – was published during his lifetime due to his will and with his permission indicates that he found it worth to be released as part of his philosophical work.

At the occasion of the 175th birthday of a local composer, the Memorial Address was presented on the 30th of October 1955 in Messkirch, a little village in the rural Black Forrest Region where Heidegger was born.

It is noteworthy that the speech deals with many issues – but ironically, it is not at all about the composer the speech is dedicated to. Generally, the speech deals with the exemplification of the rural lifestyle of the region from which both, the composer whose birthday is commemorated, and Heidegger originate from, and how pastoral customs get elevated to a philosophical world-view.

Heidegger's opening complaint that the world of today is *thoughtless* and “man today is in flight from thinking” [12, p. 45] refers to the modern world in which science and technology are ruling, and in which man allegedly gets unrooted and alienated from his origin and himself.

The alternative, the opposing image, Heidegger draws in contrast to the modern world of unrest is a rural world where man is still in the place he belongs to – a kind of “home is where the heart is.”

Heidegger's alternate universe is a provincial, romanticized version of the preindustrial eon in which man – *like a plant* – grows best only in the “native soil” [12, pp. 47-48] of the *homeland*.² Is that just folkloristic Kitsch on home (“Heimatkitsch”), as it was so popular in Germany of the 1950ies that even a special film-genre was founded in that decade, called “Heimatifilm,” or is it an innuendo to or connection point with the blood & soil ideology of the Nazis?

Lately since the publication of the *black notebooks* [16] it seems finally fully proven how close basic approaches of the person Heidegger were to Nazi-ideology. The question, if the same proposition is true, not for the person but for the philosopher Heidegger seems to be as open as the general question whether person and philosopher can be seen separated from each other.³ They cannot be seen separated.

Heidegger's name is also the name for his philosophy, a kind of trademark he himself used all his life for successful self-marketing. Secondly, it is difficult to imagine that personal attitudes do not influence philosophical thinking – on the contrary: the idea that philosophers work unbiased as the ideal researcher in science may be wishful, but it seems to be rather impossible.

Nevertheless, referring to man, metaphorically *rooting like a plant* in the soil of the “Heimat,” it may be fetched way too far to recognize in this rather sentimental remark and the following elaboration an innuendo to the “blood-and-soil-motive” of nationalistic ideologies.

For such an accusation, Heidegger's remarks on the plant-like man keep way too general, naïve, and rather romantic and bourgeois. The alleged heroic aspect, the Nazis "spiced" the image of the natural life is missed.

On the other hand, a final doubt if Heidegger really was just a romanticists keeps because the shades of the past are long in *the causa* Heidegger and they root in same ground, the Nazis put down their roots.

Due to Heidegger's – finally failed – fraternization with the Nazi-Regime, it is almost inevitable to claim that any Heideggerian statement on *Germans and soil* do not have a Nazi-reference. As such, the idea of being rooted at home may be unsuspecting – but the idea of Germans rooted in German soil proclaimed by an academic philosopher who was banned from teaching because he did not pass the denazification process till autumn 1951, casts the shadow of doubt on the presumption that Heidegger's speech from 1955 is based on nothing but romanticism.

The next textual element in the Memorial Address that may support the impression that Heidegger's speech about man is not just of general philosophical qualities but rather a cloaked nationalist description on the nature of *Germanness*, is his reference to the seven million German refugees from the former Eastern territories.

At the example of their displacement and loss of home, Heidegger extends his idyllic, and idealized image of the quasi-natural strong home ties of man. This way he avoids talking about German nationalism when doing philosophy on local attachment.

From the first day of after-war Germany until the German guarantee of the *Oder-Neiße-Line* to be the final German eastern border, the question of the former German eastern territories had been kept alive by veteran Nazis, and also refugee organizations from the same or similar political spectrum. Only politically moderate and left-wing parties have seen the loss of the former eastern territories as losses of a war, Germany had started, meanwhile refugee organizations and the connected political groups always requested a re-occupation of the former eastern territories. This political context could impossibly escape the attention of Heidegger. He talks about the tragic loss of homeland, but he does not speak about how it came to that.

Describing the pitiful de-rootedness of the German refugees as an allegory of modern man, Heidegger's ignorance toward the causes of these losses of German homeland bears a cruel irony: If Nazi-Germany did not try to steal the homelands from peoples in the East of Europe and beyond, perhaps the Germans in the Eastern territories would still root in the soil of their "Heimat."

The loss of homeland for about seven million Germans of the former Eastern territories can only been seen against the background of about twenty-three million Russians, seven million Polish and millions of humans of other nationalities who did not lose just the soil of their homeland to root in – they lost their lives by German hands.

Heidegger's *modern man*, he imagines as a plant that has been pulled out together with the roots from their cosy home-setting is not just a lost "eternal walker" like *Ahashver*. What Heidegger claims is way more: that the unrooted man has lost completely his identity.

As a central term of political approaches, in our time, "identity" experiences a renaissance [6]. Although the term is used in various political active groups, the most important group is the so-called Identitarian Movement. The concept of the Identitarian movement that is also very active in conspiracy theories contains – inter alia – of xenophobia and ethnopluralism, but a central role in their world-view is precisely the kind of localism, Heidegger described in the Memorial Address. The anthropological focus point of the Identitarians is blood & soil. This dichotomy is meant in the same way they Nazis did.

An element that in 1955, Heidegger did not mention is the xenophobic element of "the Great Replacement," originally the conspiracy idea that white European elites are planned to get substituted by non-white people. Joignot analyses that in the eyes of the Identitarians, the modern materialistic society, as well as globalism, have created a "replaceable human, without any national, ethnic or cultural specificity" [18].

In the Memorial Address, Heidegger distinguishes “calculative thinking” – as a specific characteristic for modern times, and “meditative thinking” as a pristine way of aboriginal thinking that is due to the nature of man in his quasi natural environment.

The German term for “calculative” used in the German original text is “*berechnend*.” Like in English, also in German this word has two meanings: On the one hand, “calculative” is meant in terms of mathematical numeracy, and the secondly, this word can also denote someone who is thinking only of his own advantage and benefit.

Using that term with its double meaning seems to be no accident but intention; it expresses exactly his negative evaluation on “modern” times, “modern” thinking, and – Heidegger’s adds that one: on science.

Calculative thinking is not dedicated to the meaning of the world – that reveals finally itself to the thinker – but it is seeking permanently occasions for utilization and exploitation the world. Mankind, so Heidegger says, gets lost in this kind of thinking for it is unnatural.

In its limitless, thinking the world solely as a reservoir for technological development leads to disasters, catastrophes, and finally to a complete failure. because it contradicts the world as it is...according to Heidegger.⁴

Autochthony – Heidegger insists on that – *autochthony* as the idea of the aboriginal, indigenous and – so to speak – natural existence of man has become somehow eliminated in modern thinking and times, whereas it should be seen as a quasi-natural way of living.

As a man of classic education, Heidegger must have known well the ancient Greek roots of that term.

In opposition to settlers and immigrants coming from the outside, the autochthones were the original inhabitants of a territory, maintaining the pureness of their population [3, pp. 251-275]. Is it really fetched too far, presuming that when Heidegger writes *autochthony* he in fact means racial purity?

As mentioned above, in our time, the idea of man growing ideally in native soil as “the natural setting” is one of the core points in the Identitarian ideology, meanwhile in the past this metaphor was a focus point of national fascist movements. Both their anti-modernist, their anti-global, anti-technological, xenophobic and racist approaches root in that one idea of autochthony [23].

And Heidegger says the same.

In the Memorial Address, and also in Heidegger’s other works, it is apparent that the cosmopolitan idea of a global human community stands opposite to his quasi original definition of the identitarian axiom of the primacy of homogeneous ethno-cultural entities.

Heidegger says that the special challenge for man of modern times is technology. Heidegger’s idea of “the releasement toward things” as the appropriate approach towards technology, seems to be an appeal on *coolness*, but what Heidegger expresses with it, is something else: indifference.

It is apparent that in Heidegger’s world, technology does not really matter for human being. Technology can be used like any tool, – but it finally shall have neither value for the human being nor does it help in understanding the world – but just in measuring it.

One can argue if human civilization is not just another term for technologization that comes along with a lot of negative effects, e.g. the climate change; but ignoring the meaning of technology in daily life is only possible for the one living in a past of romanticized primitivity - or in Heidegger’s remote hut in Todtnauburg.

Releasement toward things is somehow a very special attitude. If it does not stand for a special kind of complete “*Entweltlichung*” – detachment from the world – it is at least “dwarfing” a world of versatility, cultural and ethnic opulence, and pluralist possibilities.

The ideal of passiveness of man in Heideggerian philosophy appears to be contrary to (not only western) ideas of man successively understanding and also forming the world by science and technology. Heidegger’s meditative thinking claims to be the royal route to understanding the entire world – whereas he failed even clarifying the meaning of being. Heidegger’s thinking pretends to be

gigantic but actually it remains literally in intellectual provincialism of a special kind that is primarily political.

Heidegger's lifelong hide-and-seek in terms of a clear political classification was almost successful.

It seemed that in his publications, he left many traces but never real evidence for the true nature of his ideology and himself as a *meditative* and inspiring element in the frame of a nationalist fascism. Finally, the black notebooks have delivered more than just strong indications for the political horizon of his entire philosophy, as well as for the meaning of the ethnic kitsch of the Memorial Address. And what about his main work?

The still *nebulous* central term in his main work "Being and time" [14]: Dasein – that is nebulous for as such he fails to make it the key for understanding "being" – would make perfectly sense when "Dasein" was understood as "Volk" – as the central ethnic term of the German National Socialism.⁵

Under the assumption that Heidegger's "Dasein" is equal to "Volk," one can claim that "Being and Time" is the fundamental philosophical epos for intellectuals, meanwhile the Memorial Address is the popular version for the average man of a political ideology: Nazism.

Henry Drummond: As long as the prerequisite for that shining paradise is ignorance, bigotry and hate, I say the hell with it.

Inherit the wind (1960)[17]

II

Henry Drummond: Progress has never been a bargain. You have to pay for it. Sometimes I think there's a man who sits behind a counter and says, "(...) Mister, you may conquer the air, but the birds will lose their wonder and the clouds will smell of gasoline."

Inherit the wind (1960)[17]

It is not unproblematic to evaluate long gone but still popular philosophers as unique thinkers representing thought, truths and wisdom of such an outstanding quality that their work has meaning even for the now. Understanding the reasons for the meaning of their work even for today goes hand in hand with respect for the historicity of their works.

The "dead avantgarde" of philosophy is perhaps "the giant on whose shoulders" also we today's philosophers stand.

It is pure anachronism, taking directly any work of a historic philosopher as a contribution to contemporary philosophical problems. In philosophy, considering the thoughts of colleagues from before our time can be as helpful as in science. No one needs to do philosophical work starting from the scratch; but it is usually the "fallacy of a fan" to believe that particular philosophical answers of the past are meant to answer even philosophical questions of today.

"Discipleship of a Lord of philosophy" beyond the admiration the students of Socrates showed for their master, is a phenomenon that has accompanied the hype on Heidegger ever since. Partially that Heidegger-hype has even reached quasi-religious levels. What creates this impression is on the one hand the emotional deep veneration for the philosopher among his fans, looking to the other side when it is about "brown spots" in the vita of their idol, and also defending their intellectual leader often enough even beyond facts and truth, and the obvious. On the other hand, his followers fight nails and toes for the alleged pure doctrine of his work as if Heidegger brought down his books from Mount Sinai as testimonies for eternal and universal truths, as if Heidegger's philosophy was a kind of ideology or faith.

Heidegger's work shall be rather seen as a not too little philosophical contribution it was than as a transtemporal philosophy, revealing a perfect timeless insight on the puzzle of being. The person beyond his work must be seen as the author, whose vita may be even the key to understand his work that often drifts willingly into spheres of complicated formulations that pretend – or not – to be specifically deep.

Seen as phenomenon of his time, Heidegger was both, extraordinary and ordinary at the same time. Surely, his cryptic, mystical philosophy hit a nerve in the rather chaotic 1920ies in Germany. The ones looking for a strange mixture of conservative ideology with a revolutionary touch were served well already with Heidegger's early work on Being And Time. He and his philosophy became so much *en vogue* that for all decades that have followed, it has attracted the attention of each the intellectual elite, and that in two ways: be it with almost unlimited admiration for a philosophical work that seemed to be incomparably rich or be it with antipathy against his thoughts as an incomprehensible variation of Dadaism cloaked as philosophy.

Being thoroughly ethnonationalist – in Germany in Heidegger's time till 1945 and even beyond that was generally nothing alien and rather as common as the wide-spread fashion of the squarish moustache, not only Chaplin and Hitler, but also Heidegger wore in between. The evaluation of this approach has significantly changed over the decades after WWII. Successively, in Germany it has turned from a self-evident approach reaching from conservatism to fascism, to a problematic attitude that at least helped the Nazis to succeed.

The view on Heidegger's suspected political approaches and his philosophy seems to have changed parallel to that development.

Against the background of his late shattered relationship to his mentor Husserl, his anti-Jewish approaches were already a topic, as well as it was known that he understood his work as rector of Freiburg University as political work for the Nazi-regime. His temporary ban from academic teaching after WWII and the long denazification process may indicate strongly his entanglement of him in Nazim. Whatsoever, in total it must be said that Heidegger was not an active Nazi in the orbit of the Nazi leaders, he did not commit any crimes, if he intended to become a careerist, then he failed after his rectorships, and for his Nazi-approaches there has been only thin evidence in his vita. All in all, for a long a time Heidegger's approaches were more a dark immoral shadow over him than clear accusation based on flaws in his life.

That Heidegger never clarified his political convictions can have two reasons.⁶ Committing that he was at least a supporter who saw himself being the intellectual pillar of the Nazi-regime would have been rather shameful after all their crimes had become known. The world of philosophy and the public may have not forgiven him that.⁷

The illusion to be philosophically apolitical because fundamental ontology claims to hover over profane ontic politics and daily life may be another reason why he did not find a clarification of his political views necessary. The latter speculative explanation appears to be more apparent, as well as personally comfortable for him – especially since his work follows a quasi-scientific approach,⁸ already his teacher Husserl requested to become standard methodology for philosophy.

We have known this phenomenon from many scientists: Someone believing in discovering and clarifying nothing but (factual) truths, does neither feel nor think that they touch any political or ethical dimensions. Facts are facts, they are what they are and how they are, and anything else that can be said about them is beyond their original nature and just interpretation created in the mind of the observer or user. Heidegger's gigantic approach towards his own contemplative "research" to do something like "the better science on the world," revealing how it really is, is a red line throughout his entire work. The claim to have spoken final wisdom on the world made it hardly possible for him to agree with disagreement towards his work. More than that his far developed self-confidence as the pathfinder of nothing less but being let appear his work above politics and ethics – two downstream issues beyond pure being as such.

Claiming that Heidegger's philosophy is nothing else but political philosophy because it intends to appear completely apolitical is only possible if the allegation that he played intentionally

hide-and-seek in this regard can be substantiated with proof or circumstantial evidence. The latter aspect is obviously the case.

Misunderstanding the real intentions of the author or not: the question keeps, if it is not too easy to see Heidegger's work as Anthropology or philosophy of politics, and not as Ontology.⁹ Disregarding any evaluation on this point, one must say that once Heidegger's work is read as a general description of man, the congruency of his very work and the political ideology of the far-right is indeed striking.

Once, one indulges in this productive (alleged) misunderstanding, one literally can see how the "Germanic-Aryan spirit" and its ideology has been brought on the way to its fundamental description. That impression is way too perfect and complete to be solely coincidental.

Heidegger's most works read as a fundamental ontic and not-ontology superposes the clear concept of spirit of "the German race" as the National socialists have propagated it.

Therefore, it is not a miracle that till today the new far-right movements adore Heidegger as one of their inspiring spiritual leaders.

In his book "Dangerous Minds Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right," Beiner may fail to analyse Nietzsche's philosophy as a fascist ideology but referring to Heidegger his argumentation appears to be flawless, and it ends up with the claim that he was an "apostle of a resurgent fascism" [20].

Nietzsche's term of the "blond beast," and the parts of his work in which he longs for the "Uebermensch"¹⁰ are invitations for misunderstandings. The contexts, his works and his statements in letters may speak against the idea of him as a premature mastermind of fascism and the Nazis. Not unlike in the Heidegger case, the question is, however, why a thinker shall not be held responsible for misunderstanding them due to the missing will or skills to be clear.

What makes both the thinkers attractive to neo-fascism is the alleged inherent extra-morality of their philosophy. Fascism and neo-Fascism obviously never tried to pretend being moral: on the contrary.

Seen from a distance, it is the complete absence of morality that creates and justifies the cruelty of fascism, cloaked as total freedom from moral thinking. Instead of values, fascism is built on a few obligations of radical loyalty only. Dedication to the own (usually "race" and "fatherland") and unconditional obedience within a hierarchy that claims to be the natural order. These main elements do not hover in the air, they are derived from the natural, factual state of the individual – as described also in Heidegger's Memorial Address. Especially the German fascism has been based on the idea of the origin and rooting of the aboriginal German in his home region where he lives among his folks, as the natural habitat that deserves total loyalty.

The idea of being elitist roots in the conviction that the natural state of being among the own needs to be defended against others. There is always the others. And the others are the enemy in the permanent fight for existence. Fascism also consists of the amazing idea that the strongest and chosen ones is each the own people.¹¹

The point of "life as a permanent fight for existence," I have to admit that, is an element of fascism that cannot be found in Heidegger's work. Neither any kind of "survival of the fittest" in social-Darwinist terms nor any aggressive undertones can get derived from his books. Where Heidegger keeps the idea of the romantic, naïve, idyllic and perfect world, the political far-right starts at least to dream about fighting for it.

The question is, however, how to establish the nice and clean world Heidegger is talking about. What is necessary to do to make it come true?

What about eliminating any "disturbing factors" that stand in the way to paradise? Heidegger's antipathy against the modern world of towns, the world in which technology rules, and where the German *Heimat* gets flooded by aliens is obvious. He only spares us his phantasies on how the fight for his alternative and naturally neat home may look like. He keeps focused on the fundamental description of the world how it should be at best.

A paradise on the earth is always an attractive idea. No idealist philosophy or phantasy has ever revealed the crimes and atrocities that are necessary to reach the state of perfectness. Man of the mind, ambitious enough to think the perfect world, usually keep it for men of action to realize their idea.¹² Thinking any imaginary idyll without considering the way to is like talking about Hitler's idea of the monumental future German capital *Germania* without mentioning Auschwitz - or to be up-to-date: it is like discussing Putin's dream of the gigantic Eurasian Empire lead by the Russian avantgarde without mentioning the necessary mass murder in Ukraine to realize his political philosophy.

The cosy world of Heidegger's *Heimat* is a pedigree brainchild without an equivalent in the real world. It does not exist, and it even did never exist the way he described it in the past: Heidegger's *Eutopia* is *Utopia*.

Defeating the allegedly unperfect reality and realizing the ideal world requires usually a lot of violence. Circumstances do not bow to ideas just because they are nice. Forming reality due to ideological ideas needs ruthless men of action.

Action would be "pretty ontic," and so, action it is a too low level for Heidegger's ontology; and it would destroy the idyllic impression of his cosy world. That is maybe why he refused to bow down to descriptions of the violent attitude that is necessary for the action to build up his idyll.

Focusing on ontology may be also the reason why the proven anti-Semitism in the Black Notebooks cannot be found work of Heidegger, published in his lifetime. Where ontology rules, lower ranked issues, although they might be perhaps fundamental for the philosopher himself, are not worth to get clearly mentioned in his work.

The historical and private context of Heidegger's work is essential for a realistic classification and meaning of his philosophy.

Without doubts, e.g. the folkloristic Bavarian regional writer Ludwig Thoma had quite similar ideas referring to the ethnic settings in the Memorial Address but although it is probable that he even knew the young Hitler personally, his work and approaches deserve another evaluation. Thoma had died in 1921, 10 years before the Nazis came to power.

So, seen in his timeframe, in ideological terms, Thoma may have been at best a trailblazer for the ethnic ideas, the Nazis realized, whereas Heidegger got engaged within the Nazis system, in personal ways, by his intellectual contributions based on a shared world-view.

It is not fetched too far, claiming that the after-war Memorial Address breathes the very same air than the writings of e.g. Walther Darré, who served the Nazis as Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Reichsbauernführer).

As the main representative of the Nazi's ecofascism, in his main works [4], [5], Darré's thoughts about the "Nordic race" and its relation to "blood & soil" reads as the ontic description Heidegger transposes later to a more abstract level in his Memorial Address.

There is no direct textual accordance of Darré and Heidegger, but down to the details, the fundamental idea of the attachment to the native soil is congruent.

As much as for Darré the *peasantisation* of the German society was the supreme goal, Heidegger postulates a rural approach to be the natural way of perfect living, rooted in the homeland.

Darré and Heidegger seem to be "thinkers in arms" also when it comes to their rejections and disgust towards any "unrooted" life. Whereas Darré connects that kind of life to – inter alia – Semitic people, Heidegger keeps silent who is meant with them. He focusses on the unnatural and unsteady life in the cities, as the negative alternative concept to a primeval "natural life" as an ideal of the political neo-far-right that nowadays even right-wing terrorists like Brandon Tarrant [19], "Putin's brain" Alexander Dugin [9], the Alt-Right movement, or white supremacists have picked up.

Conclusion

Like Simone de Beauvoir concerning de Sade [7], one must ask now:
Must We Burn Heidegger?

I suppose that an appropriate way to deal with him and with his philosophy is to see it all in the context of his time, his vita, and also in the context of his anti-Semitism, proven in the Black Notes. Heidegger was a thinker in sync with fundamental Nazi-ideology.

He was not the “neutral, unbiased thinker” he tried to represent himself in public and in the philosophy communities.

In fact, there is nothing like a “neutral thinker”!

That against the obvious entanglements with Nazi ideology, so many professional and academic philosophers have bought that bold claim from Heidegger, to be “neutral”: that is truly amazing.

That Heidegger may have seen himself off any ideology is not surprising.

Each ideology does not see itself as just one possibility to see the world among many competing worldviews: every ideology sees itself as the only natural and genuine worldview. Seen from this perspective, any other ideology is always just heresy, and the own ideology is nothing but a clear view on the world as it is – and should be.

Heidegger is hedged ideology, and it is up to the specialists in ontology to decide if he ever reached the ontological levels he claimed to have reached.

Did he fail as a philosopher? If it is about success in philosophy in terms of clarifying things: Yes, he failed. If it is about philosophy as permanent trial to think the world: No, he failed not.

He just tried to think, but could not evade and avoid the pitfalls of his approaches and maybe character. Even a big mind like Heidegger could not disconnect himself from his thinking.

But is Heidegger a “dangerous mind,” and are his books “too radioactive” to touch?

I would finally answer those questions by modifying de Beauvoir’s conclusion on de Sade: “It was not murder that fulfilled Heidegger’s profound thinking; it was philosophy.” [7].

Heidegger’s books shall not be burnt, but they shall be taken the way they were meant. And that is anything else but harmless philosophy.

The idea that philosophy is harmless must be abandoned. There is no harmlessness in any philosophy.

During his lifetime, Heidegger went actually scot-free with his dangerous philosophy. He never really paid for it.

Socrates was less lucky.

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Notes

1. Why Heidegger published a rather profane public speech is not known; maybe because he wanted to prove how close indeed, he was to the average man? Anyhow the text is somehow a revelation in terms of his political approaches.
2. In the original German text, the term for homeland is “Heimat” – a word that cannot get translated to English with the rich meaning of the German original term.
Bickle concluded well that “Heimat” has no equivalent in the English language because the term originates from German Romanticism and -nationalism, and it explicitly connotes to German culture, -society, -statehood [2]; and -regionalism: to which Heidegger explicitly refers to in the Memorial Address. In Germany, the term of “Heimat” was a most central term, later misused by the Nazis. Heidegger may go beyond that back in time and refer to German Romanticism – but he must have known that ten years after WWII, when he gave the Memorial Address, the term “sounds” more like The Third Reich but 19th century.
The remarkable issue that comes along with that term is that although other foreign languages do not have a full equivalent term either, in times of a renaissance of right-wing, and nationalist ideas especially in Eastern European, each the national word for “fatherland” seems to align to the meaning of the German word. One reason for that may be that nationalist and fascist ideologies re-define semantics of crucial terms of their ideology, independently from their nationality.

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3. The famous anecdote on Heidegger's lecture on Aristotle, Hannah Arendt reported about [1, p. 184], seems to indicate that Heidegger followed Bacon's and Kant's motto "De nobis ipsis solimur" – about us we keep silent" when it is about the person of a philosopher. Arendt claims that Heidegger opened the lecture with the sole biographic remark "Aristotle was born, worked and died." Anyhow, this anecdote does not reveal anything about the identity of person and philosophy of a thinker; especially not referring to Heidegger. Generally, it keeps an amazing fact that of all people it was especially Hannah Arendt who always kept Heidegger in high esteem – ignoring his vita but admiring him as a man and also as a philosopher. Her evaluation on Eichmann was less lenient.
 4. The compatibility of Heidegger's idyllic world view with the fundamental ideology of nature conservation of the German Green Party was analysed well by Gumbrecht [11, p. 22]. In his article, Gumbrecht concludes not just that the basic world-view of Heidegger and the Greens is the very same: the best for world and man would be an untouched world of nature. En passant, Gumbrecht discovers that nature conservation is not a primarily core element of left-wing ideologies but an issue in full sync with a very conservative world-views, and also with Nazi-ideology. At first glance, this all seems to be pretty absurd, but indeed, in the early years especially of the German Green Party, The Greens were a movement in which also former Nazis and neo-Nazis got active [22]. In their world-view, pureness of race and pureness of nature take the same rail.
 5. During the preparations for my Ph.D.-thesis in 1996, in a not fruitful talk about Heidegger's political ideas, Otto Poeggeler claimed that until 1929, for Heidegger, Dasein and Volk were synonyms. Being asked for the cryptic remark "until 1929" Poeggeler answered: "You will find out!" I never did.
Although, as Trawny [21] and others have shown, the student notes about a 1933/34 winter semester seminar [15, p. 55] are interesting in this frame but not unproblematic because they are hearsay. Heidegger's alleged sentence that "Das Volk ist das Seiende, dessen Sein der Staat ist" (Freely translated: The people is existing, and what it gives being is the State) indicates strongly that Heidegger never gave up thinking about the people and the State in terms of his own philosophical terminology. My question since 1996 has been: Did he transpose his fundamental ontology to a philosophy of a later established national socialist State, or was it the case that in the 1920ies he surprisingly thought to see a congruency between his philosophy and the then upcoming still National socialism? Independently from this question on that detail, the congruency between basic NS-ideas and his philosophy is too clear to be an accident. Even the more speculative question if Heidegger agreed or not with the murderous anti-Semitism of the Nazis or not is finally without relevance. It seems to be apparent that an intellectual conformity of his philosophy and the NS-ideology is the case.
 6. The idea that in the event of a Freudian repression, after WWII, also Heidegger – as well as the entire German people – *prevented the unacceptable fact* that he had been part of the Nazi-system *from entering the conscious mind* [10] is still as popular as it is speculative; too speculative to mention it here as a serious explanation for Heidegger's motives not to talk about his political approaches.
 7. In after-war German, for obvious reasons no one came forward publicly with the confession to be a Nazi. "The great silence" of the ones who were with the Nazis has never ended.
 8. or more: ...a pseudo-scientific approach!
 9. Taken as anthropology or philosophy of politics, the shining glamour that has been created around Heidegger's ontology changes to nothing but blunt profanity.
 10. The regular English translation of "Uebersch" as "superman" is rather preposterous; the preposition "Ueber-" (over) indicates a higher development of man above the current stage.
 11. The Italian fascism and the German Nazis – that was indeed an amazing brotherhood in arms. Within the Nazi philosophy, logically it cannot get explained why the meridional and pretty little Nordic Italians were accepted as equals; only the fact that Hitler was a fan of Mussolini made this rather strange relationship explainable
 12. How much violence is hidden behind beautiful dreams of a perfect world (of what kind ever) is not subject to speculations: in history a lot of examples for that can be found. A rather speculative but nonetheless interesting question is e.g., if Marx would have formulated the idea of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" if he had also the mind power to imagine the terror and millions of murdered people that were necessary even to reach an early step of the later coming real-existing dictatorship of the proletariat. The final dream was never realized.