

# Heidegger and the Politics of the University

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*An ancient proverb ran, "He who learns but does not think is lost." Confucius added, "He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger."*

IF THIS PROVERB'S EXHORTATION TO THINKING sounds paradigmatically Heideggerian, Confucius's wise rejoinder helps raise that haunting political question: What, if anything, did Heidegger *learn* from his appalling misadventure with Nazism? Heidegger told *Der Spiegel* that he reached this infamous political decision "by way of the university." If, as I believe, Heidegger's philosophical views on higher education were largely responsible for his decision to become the first Nazi Rector of Freiburg University in 1933, then one of our Confucian questions becomes: Did Heidegger learn from what he later called his "life's greatest stupidity" and transform the underlying philosophical views that helped motivate this "political mistake"?<sup>2</sup>

The only scholars to address this question, Otto Pöggeler and Jacques Derrida, both think so.<sup>3</sup> We will examine their interpretations once we are in a better position to evaluate them. Obviously, we need first to understand Heidegger's early views on university education before we can decide whether or not he changed these views after the war. This task is complicated, however, by the fact that Heidegger's early work on the university turns out to be less philosophically ho-

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<sup>1</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, Arthur Waley, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), II.11, 91 (translation emended).

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, "Only A God Can Save Us," Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo, trans., in *The Heidegger Controversy*, Richard Wolin, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 103; Heinrich W. Petzet, "Afterthoughts on the Spiegel Interview," Lisa Harries, trans., in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering, eds. (New York, Paragon House: 1990), 72; Stephen Crowell, "Philosophy as a Vocation: Heidegger and University Reform in the Early Inter-war Years," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14 (1997): 256 (my interpretation builds on this groundbreaking article, esp. in Section 2); Heinrich W. Petzet, *Encounters & Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976*, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 37.

<sup>3</sup> Pöggeler, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, John Bailiff, trans. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998), 50; Derrida, "Mochlos; or, The Conflict of the Faculties," Richard Rand and Amy Wygant, trans., in *Logomachia: The Conflict of the Faculties*, Richard Rand, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 8.

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mogenous than previously supposed. Since, as Aristotle observed, “[t]he best way to study politics and other matters is to trace things back to their beginnings and observe their growth,” our first major goal will be to reconstruct the development of Heidegger’s views on higher education during the period between 1911 and 1933. Proceeding chronologically, I will try to do justice to the most politically significant aspects of these views without claiming to exhaust them. Along the way, I will summarize the later Heidegger’s mature philosophical understanding of the genuine task of university education. With both tasks accomplished, we will be able to determine whether Pöggeler and Derrida are right that Heidegger’s mature work represents a philosophically significant departure from his earlier views on university education, or whether, on the contrary, Heidegger never abandoned the main philosophical views that led him to throw his philosophical weight behind the National Socialist movement in the early 1930s.<sup>4</sup>

#### I. HEIDEGGER’S EARLIEST VIEWS ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (1911)

Focusing on Heidegger’s early work (1911–29), scholars such as Theodore Kisiel, John van Buren, Steven Crowell, Alan Milchman, and Alan Rosenberg show that Heidegger’s radical critique of the university significantly antedates the rise of the National Socialist “revolution.”<sup>5</sup> In the early 1930s, the rise of Nazism provided Heidegger with the opportunity to attempt to realize his philosophical vision for a radical reformation of the German university. Although this ambitiously conceived attempt was quickly aborted, the project itself has its roots in Heidegger’s very earliest work.

In 1911, while still studying theology at Freiburg University, the twenty-two year-old Heidegger published a short but ambitious article, “Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics,” in the conservative Catholic journal *The Academic*. Here Heidegger, already critical of the academic status quo, employs what would become one of his trademark distinctions in order to differentiate the current state-of-affairs in “philosophy” from a more genuine “thinking.” “Philosophy,” he begins, is “in truth a mirror of the eternal,” but “[t]hinking’ can no longer let itself be constrained by the eternally immobile limits of logical propositions.” When thinking accepts the yoke of formal validity and so forces itself merely to string propositions together, the result, Heidegger presciently warns, is that mere “connoisseurship in philosophical questions which has already become a sport.” The young Heidegger sees signs of hope, however, for even among philosophers whose thinking has degenerated into logical puzzle-solving, “occasionally—despite so much smug self-consciousness—the unconscious longing breaks out for fulfilled, fulfilling answers to the ultimate questions of being, questions which suddenly

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a25–26 (Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, trans.); Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, Ewald Osers, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 235.

<sup>5</sup> See the important work by Kisiel, *The Genesis of Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xiii; Crowell, op. cit., 255–6; Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, “Martin Heidegger and the University as a Site for the Transformation of Human Existence,” *The Review of Politics* 59 (1997): 77, 80–6; and John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 352–7.

flash up, and then lie unresolved, like lead weights, in the tortured soul deprived of goals and ways.”<sup>6</sup>

This 1911 invocation of the “ultimate questions of being” (*Endfragen des Seins*) clearly anticipates Heidegger’s famous “question of being” (*Seinsfrage*).<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, Heidegger inadvertently complicated the interpretation of this early article when he neglected to schedule it (or the seven other contributions he made to *The Academic* between 1910 and 1912) for inclusion in his supposedly “*Complete Works*” (*Gesamtausgabe*). This editorial oversight has now been rectified, but Hugo Ott, who first brought these early publications to the attention of scholars, interpreted Heidegger’s omission of his *Jugendschriften* as a deliberate “suppression” of the Catholic origins to which, Ott misleadingly claimed, Heidegger later came back full circle. This history is significant because John van Buren, the only scholar to interpret this early piece in terms of Heidegger’s critique of the university, too closely follows Ott’s overemphasis of Heidegger’s Catholicism. Thus van Buren reads this article as an expression of Heidegger’s “ultraconservative Catholicism,” ignoring the subtle but important means by which Heidegger, a young scholar in a professionally precarious position, signals the distinctiveness of his own views, and so also their distance from the ideology of the Catholic authorities allowing his work to appear.<sup>8</sup>

The young Heidegger, still hoping for a career as a professor of theology, does pay homage to the pedagogical need for fulfilling *answers*, and thus to the need for “a more thorough apologetic education” which, he implies, could supply such answers. At the same time, however, Heidegger suggests that these fulfilling answers can arise only through a pursuit of the ultimate *questions* of being. Indeed, what makes the “apologetic education” he calls for “more thorough” is precisely the *ontological questioning* he seeks to move to the center of the theology curriculum. Such philosophical studies provide “a solid foundation” (*eine gründliche Fundamentierung*) for “theological knowledge.” In effect, Heidegger presents the philosophical pursuit of the “ultimate questions of being” as a necessary *prerequisite* to the discovery of fulfilling theological answers. This, then, is the “philosophical orientation” he advocates: Theological answers should be grounded in ontological questioning.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, “Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics,” John Protevi, trans., *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–5 (1991): 496–7.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger began his formative reading of Franz Brentano’s *The Manifold Senses of Being in Aristotle* in 1907; see Heidegger, “My Way to Phenomenology,” in *On Time and Being*, Joan Stambaugh, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 74.

<sup>8</sup> Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, Allan Blunden, trans. (London: Basic Books, 1993), 384; Ott, “Preface” to “Heidegger’s Contributions to *Der Akademiker*,” Marcus Brainard and Friederike-Andrea Dörner, trans., *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–5 (1991): 481–5. See Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges, 1910–1976* (hereafter “GA16”); van Buren, op. cit., 122–9, 355 (cf. van Buren’s insightful characterization of Heidegger’s position as “revolutionary conservatism” [ibid., 125]); Heidegger, “Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics,” 496–501. In 1910, the Catholic church required clerics to swear an “oath against modernism” (Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 28). Heidegger’s 1911 proclamation that philosophical thinking “can no longer let itself be constrained by the eternally immobile limits of logical propositions” suggests his unwillingness to agree that the results of his philosophical investigations will stay within boundaries set by papal fiat. This reinforces my claim, pace Ott and van Buren, that the young Heidegger is already ambivalent about Catholicism and modernism, as does Robert Vigliotti’s “The Young Heidegger’s Ambitions for the Chair of Catholic Philosophy and Hugo Ott’s Charge of Opportunism,” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 1 (2001): 323–50.

In order to motivate this unlikely call for his conservative Catholic colleagues to recognize the pedagogical primacy of ontological questioning and transform the university curriculum accordingly, Heidegger implies that this transformation is made necessary by distinctively modern pedagogical problems. If theology is to continue providing the “goals and ways” without which modern “students lose themselves in the face of all the various things which distract, interest, and mobilize them,” then the theology curriculum must encourage students to pursue the ultimate questions of being. Otherwise, Heidegger emphasizes (with a bit of Nietzschean word-play), the “estranging entanglements” (*Fremdverwicklung*) of the modern world will alienate students from their “personal development” (*Eigeneutwicklung*). Heidegger’s word-play has a serious intent. *Eigeneutwicklung* connotes the “unfolding of that which is one’s own,” a coinage that allows him to raise obliquely, in an anti-modern journal, the problem at the center of modern philosophy of education debates: the famous *Bildungsfrage*, the question of how education can best serve the “cultivation” or “development” of essential human capacities. Indeed, Heidegger implicitly *answers* this *Bildungsfrage* when he suggests that ontological questioning will help students stay focused on developing that which is most their own and thereby avoid the alienating entanglements of the modern world. Here we witness a crucial moment in the development of Heidegger’s critique of higher education—the first appearance of a general strategy for university reform he will never subsequently abandon—namely, the attempt to answer the *Bildungsfrage* by yoking pedagogical reform to ontological questioning.

While the young Heidegger makes the important suggestion that ontological questioning will answer the *Bildungsfrage*, he is not yet able to say much about *how* it will do so. Instead, he admits that “this fundamental demand [that academics should help students develop that which is their own] includes, along with its great inner worth, *the entire difficulty of how adequately to fulfill it.*” The *Bildungsfrage* remains a “problem” academics “must face up to all the more energetically.” It is important to observe, however, that the young Heidegger’s suggestions for a solution to the problem of *Bildung*, although meager, are markedly *individualistic*. Indeed, he throws almost the entire task of self-development back onto the students themselves. “Young minds search, driven by an inner, magical urge for truth,” and must be allowed the “justified egoism” of developing that which is their own. The sole philosophical guidance Heidegger offers consists in his recommendation of several introductory philosophy texts along with the stern advice that only intensive personal study will allow students to acquire the philosophical background necessary for a genuine appropriation of the theological tradition. Only “an undaunted, unceasing activity on one’s own part” will allow students to “secure” the philosophical “pre-knowledge” necessary for appropriating the theological tradition’s “treasure of truths.” “One only possesses truth in a genuine sense when one has made it one’s own in this way.”<sup>9</sup> Pace Ott and van Buren, such

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, “Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics,” 496–7 (my emphasis). Heidegger will later seek to recover the “true or genuine” meaning of *Bildung* by reconnecting it to the Platonic conception of *paideia*, as I show in “Heidegger on Ontological Education, or: How We Become What We Are,” *Inquiry* 44 (2001): 243–68.

calls for the individual to personally re-appropriate the living core of the tradition put Heidegger closer to Protestantism than to “ultraconservative Catholicism.”<sup>10</sup>

If we step back, then, we can see that Heidegger’s earliest critique of university education is marked by a series of unstable tensions: he situates himself politically as a conservative Catholic, but provides strategic advice that sounds programmatically Protestant; he writes as a theologian, yet makes a case for philosophy as a necessary prerequisite to theology; he fulminates against the philosophical establishment while calling for more students to take up “serious philosophical studies”; and, finally, he criticizes the prevalence of “subjective opinions, personal moods and wishes” in contemporary “life-philosophy,” then basically leaves it up to individual students to direct their own philosophical development. Given these tensions, it is not too surprising that this early piece advances only a few crucial steps “Toward a Philosophical Orientation for Academics.” It remains an important document nonetheless because Heidegger gives up neither the ambition its title expresses nor the idea, first advanced here, that the best way to provide the academy with such a “philosophical orientation” involves yoking pedagogical reform to ontological questioning. Heidegger will flesh out this strategy over the next two decades, finally presenting his own substantive vision for a philosophical re-orientation of the German academy as a whole in 1927. Before he can develop this positive philosophical vision for radical university reform, however, he will have to work through some of the tensions that characterize this early piece. As it turns out, Heidegger’s philosophical studies soon supplant the theology they were meant to supplement, and his youthful individualism holds out only a few years longer against his growing sense that Germany is undergoing a historical crisis to which the philosopher is called to respond. To see this, let us skip ahead seven years.

## 2. TO EDUCATE THE NATION (1918 TO 1924)

On November 7, 1918, Heidegger writes to Elisabeth Blochmann from the western front. From his meteorological weather service station, the young Army corporal has just had a bird’s eye view of Germany’s defeat in the First World War. As he confronts the obvious uncertainty of the postwar future, Heidegger first articulates his fateful ambition “to educate the nation,” sharing with Blochmann his “unshakable” certainty that Germany now needs the kind of spiritual leadership only a philosophical education can provide:

What shape life generally will assume after this end, which was bound to come and is now our only salvation, is uncertain. Certain and unshakable is the challenge to all truly spiritual persons not to weaken at this particular moment but to grasp resolute leadership and to educate the nation toward truthfulness and a genuine valuation of the genuine assets of existence.

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<sup>10</sup> Most readings of Heidegger’s earliest work overlook this individualistic streak, a testament to his formative encounters with Luther and Kierkegaard and to the influence of German Idealism, the *locus originarius* of the modern *Bildungsfrage*. (See Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 357–8; Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 427.)

Upon returning to his teaching duties at Freiburg later that month, Heidegger thus adopts an optimistic view of the German defeat, which he now sees as the opportunity for a philosophical “new beginning.” His hope is that the “outward deprivations” of the war’s aftermath will serve the cause of *genuine* education (in other words, *Bildung*) by encouraging students to renounce distracting external entanglements and develop those inward and authentic “assets of existence” no defeat can take away.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger’s optimistic interpretation of Germany’s defeat is a bit idiosyncratic, but his intellectual trajectory—a postwar return to an earlier pedagogical concern with *Bildung*—coincides with a much broader current of the German *Zeitgeist*.

Following the defeat of the First World War, Germany was felt to be in the grip of a profound historical crisis. Prominent German intellectuals had presented the war as a struggle for the “spiritual and intellectual leadership [*geistige Führung*] of the world,” a struggle that Germany—owing to its supposedly unique spiritual character, its “inwardness” (*Innerlichkeit*)—was both entitled and destined to win.<sup>12</sup> Thus many reacted to Germany’s surrender with disbelief and denial. A common response was to explain away the German defeat by invoking the fateful legend of the “stab-in-the-back,” the idea that Germany’s leaders betrayed the military by surrendering just as the tide of the war was turning (a myth Hitler later mobilized to great effect). A more interesting reaction, from our perspective, occurred when such a refusal to admit defeat combined with a sense that the historical crisis the war represented had not yet been resolved. The result was a dramatic rationalization of Germany’s defeat as merely a lost battle in a much larger war—on the grandest scale, a war over the meaning of Western history itself—indeed, a lost battle whose hidden virtue had been to render visible this larger, more important war.

Giving this grandiloquent interpretation a popular-philosophical expression, Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* became incredibly influential. Published in 1918, it sold an astounding 600,000 copies by 1920, quickly spreading into every corner of the intellectual world its neo-Nietzschean prognosis that the spiritual energies of the occident were declining into an enervating cultural senescence and issuing forth a resounding call for heroic German leadership capable of reversing this historical slide into nihilism. Although Heidegger was never an uncritical supporter of Spengler, he was sympathetic to the “tragic” Nietzschean view of historical decline underwriting Spengler’s narrative, and the political energies mobilized by the Spenglerians undeniably served Heidegger’s own agenda for radical educational reform. For as the tidal wave of German post-war discontent spread, “discussions and plans were everywhere for the reform of Germany’s educational system,” and even prominent academics felt impelled to situate themselves with respect to Spengler’s hypothesis of cultural decline and the ensuing call for heroic leadership.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Safranski, *op. cit.*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, 13–51; Heidegger, GA16, 285–308.

<sup>13</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Helmut Werner, ed., Charles Francis Atkinson, trans. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36–40; Safranski, *op. cit.*, 92; van Buren, *op. cit.*, 354; Pöggeler, *op. cit.*, 38.

It was as an early intervention against precisely this Spenglerian agenda for educational reform that, in the winter of 1918, an ailing Max Weber delivered his famous Munich lecture, "Science as a Vocation" (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*). "Science" is a notoriously misleading translation of the German *Wissenschaft*, which refers more broadly to the *knowledge* embodied in the humanities as well as the natural and social sciences. Weber's title could thus be rendered "Knowledge as a Calling"; yet, despite the "calling" in its title, Weber's lecture stoically embraced a "disenchanted" vocationalization of the German academy. Seeking to puncture the "romantic" illusions of the contemporary "youth" who "crave a leader and not a teacher," Weber takes direct aim at the Spenglerian demand that intellectuals should assume spiritual leadership of Germany, answering questions about what really matters in order to rescue the nation from its growing sense of meaninglessness. Relying on an absolute fact/value dichotomy, Weber classifies all such attempts to say "what matters" as value judgments. For Weber, conflicting value-judgments ultimately come down to a collision of incommensurable "worldviews," a "struggle" between competing "godheads" (as he memorably puts it), and the university lectern is no place for "prophets dispensing sacred values." Instead, Weber concludes pragmatically, academics should confine themselves to the "stern seriousness" of sober "analyses and statements of fact" and so "set to work and meet 'the demands of the day.'" Thus, from outside the academy, Spengler issued a dramatic Nietzschean call for a heroic response to the historical crisis, and Weber, from a leading position within the university, countered with a resolute refusal to forsake scientific objectivity in order to answer such a call. The competing positions in the debate over university reform were thereby established. Those influenced by Spengler wanted academics to intervene actively in cultural politics, while Weberians sought to isolate the university from the political turbulence of the times.<sup>14</sup>

It is no coincidence that Heidegger begins his own lectures in 1919 with some "preliminary remarks" on "Science and University Reform," then gives a lecture course the following semester "On the Nature of the University and Academic Study." In both cases it is clear that Heidegger is grappling not only with the general Spenglerian *Zeitgeist*, but with Weber's iconoclastic response in particular. Hans-Georg Gadamer, one of Heidegger's students at the time, would later attest: "This inner-worldly asceticism of a value-free science which is then perfected by a certain kind of decisionism, we found it majestic but impossible. Heidegger felt that too. . . . One saw [Weber] as a symbol of a kind of scientific life with which we could not identify."<sup>15</sup> I submit, however, that Heidegger's attitude toward Weber's "majestic but impossible" scientific ideal is more complex than Gadamer's retrospective remark suggests. Heidegger does reject as unrealistic Weber's idea that academic researchers could *maintain* a "purely theoretical objectivity," but he nev-

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<sup>14</sup> Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. and trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 131, 148–9, 151–2, 155–6.

<sup>15</sup> Gadamer, "Interview: The 1920s, 1930s, and the Present: National Socialism, German History, and German Culture," *On Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, eds., Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss, trans. (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1992), 140.

ertheless appropriates Weber's vision of value-free science as a guiding ideal, a goal to be constantly pursued if only occasionally attained. As Heidegger assures his students in 1919, "a purely theoretical objectivity is possible."<sup>16</sup>

Heidegger reaches this compromise by defending the view (later developed in *Being and Time*) that: "The theoretical world is not always there, but is accessible only in a constantly renewed divesting of the natural world."<sup>17</sup> The life of science cannot be isolated from the rest of one's life, nor *should* it be; the "theoretical life" must be "constantly renewed" by being reconnected to the "experiential" life-context from which it arises. Moreover, "the scientific man does not stand in isolation" in a further sense: the practices that encourage objectivity are not merely individual, but depend on a *community* of practitioners. In order for science to become "the *habitus* of a personal existence," an individual's scientific practices must be supported by "a community of similarly striving researchers." Here we observe another important development in Heidegger's philosophical views on the university. The individualism that characterized his earliest views on education is supplemented by this new emphasis on the individual's relation to the scientific community—supplemented, but not yet supplanted. For while Heidegger proclaims that the university community has a common, unifying goal—namely, "to awaken and heighten the life-context of scientific consciousness"—he also insists that such a scientific consciousness can only be "authentically realized" if it "grows from an inner calling" of the individual researcher.<sup>18</sup>

As Heidegger adopts Weber's famous description of the individual *called* into the scientific community, he appropriates the Weberian ideal of theoretical objectivity he seemed to Gadamer to reject. To "authentically realize" one's "scientific consciousness," Heidegger explains, means *attaining*, however episodically, a "purely theoretical objectivity." Describing this "realization" of scientific objectivity in terms of a series of progressive stages, Heidegger postulates a hierarchy of modes of "theoretical comportment," a progression culminating in the Weberian ideal of "absolute veracity." Heidegger even goes so far as to tell his students that Weber's "'vocational question' stands at the entrance to the theoretical life-context: Can I maintain myself in the disposition to absolute veracity?" Heidegger thus appropriates Weber's ideal of value-free science, but only after re-romanticizing it, portraying the struggle for "theoretical objectivity" as a Herculean labor to be heroically pursued, and urging this ongoing struggle for objectivity with the bold Nietzschean motto of an "*education for truthfulness*."<sup>19</sup>

If we step back again, then, we can see that Heidegger tries to answer *both* the romantic Spenglerian-Nietzschean call for intellectuals to help revitalize Germany by providing heroic leadership *and* the ascetic Weberian demand that academics

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, Ted Sadler, trans. (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 174 (translation corrected) / *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (hereafter "GA56-57"), 206.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 179/GA56-57, 211. *Being and Time* develops this insight in terms of that "transformation" (*Umschlag*) whereby "hands-on" (*zuhanden*) entities implicitly encountered in holistic contexts of practical use are "de-worlded" and so transformed into "on-hand" (*vorhanden*) objects explicitly accessible to theoretical comprehension.

<sup>18</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 4-5/GA56-57, 76; Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* [hereafter "GA61"], 72-3.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 179-80/GA56-57, 211-4.



should maintain the sober discipline required for theoretical objectivity. In effect, he accepts the Nietzschean-Spenglerian call for heroic intellectual leadership, but characterizes this leadership in terms of a modified Weberian view of the task of science. The result of this unlikely union of Spengler and Weber is a kind of *romantic asceticism*, an unstable mix to be sure, and one in which the starkest tension in Heidegger's views on education during the early 1920s stands clearly revealed. Not surprisingly, this tension will be short-lived. By the end of the decade, the romantic Nietzschean longing for meaning will have driven out the sober asceticism of the Weberian quest for a rigorous, value-free science.

If Heidegger nevertheless exhibits a surprising proximity to Weber during the early 1920s, these remarkable similarities stem not only from their mutual belief in the importance of scientific "objectivity" (*Sachlichkeit*, the same hard-nosed trait that attracted the young Carnap to Heidegger), but also from a shared opposition to Spengler himself.<sup>20</sup> Of course, Heidegger's reasons for criticizing Spengler are the very opposite of Weber's: for Heidegger, Spengler is insufficiently "radical," a mere "vulgarization" of Nietzsche. Still, given Heidegger's growing Nietzscheanism, and what would come from it between 1929 and 1933, some of Heidegger's sober, Weberian-sounding pronouncements during the early twenties are simply startling. "So long as it remains true to itself," Heidegger writes in 1920, "philosophy is not called to save or redeem the age." Turning Spengler against Spengler (and thus against the various neo-Kantians, world-view philosophers, and life-philosophers vying to supply Germany with the leadership for which Spengler called), Heidegger contends ironically that the real historical "decline" is visible in the very demand that philosophy should issue in the "developed doctrine" of a culture-serving "worldview."<sup>21</sup> Between 1921 and 1923, Heidegger further declares that it is not for the philosopher to "write a system" or "program" for "university reform," even insisting that serious philosophical discussions of university reform must reject "pseudo-religiosity" and the appeal of "prophethood and the allure of the leader [*Führerallüren*]," sober Weberian warnings Heidegger will ignore—along with his earlier admonition against "external entanglements"—to his own detriment between 1929 and 1933.<sup>22</sup>

To summarize briefly the central features of Heidegger's mature views on university education, let us address the question that will seem obvious at this point. What happened to these sober Weberian analyses? Why did Heidegger so soon discard his own good advice? As the decade drew to a close, Heidegger seems to have concluded that Weber threw out the stereo along with the Styrofoam, so to speak. For in rejecting Spengler, Weber was also rejecting two crucial, interre-

<sup>20</sup> See Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2000), 12–8; and, on Spengler, see Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, John van Buren, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 29, 44–5; Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 75; Heidegger, *Parmenides*, André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 113.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks* (hereafter "GA59"), 170; Heidegger, GA61, 50, 74.

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, GA63, 19; Heidegger, GA61, 46–7, 69–70. Heidegger adds a striking exclamation in parentheses: "(One writes today about the *Führer* problem!)" (GA61, 70. Cf. GA63, 30–3).

lated aspects of the legacy of Nietzsche, on the one hand, and Fichte and Humboldt, on the other, namely, the struggle against nihilism and the philosophical vision of a distinctively German university. Indeed, it is important to realize that, from the German perspective, Weber played the role of an intellectual collaborator. He presents the invading forces of “rationalization” rhetorically as American and French, then counsels his audience to lay down their arms, as it were, and accept as an irreversible historical fact that these forces of rationalization have rendered “fictitious” not just the reality but the very idea of the modern German university. What exactly was Weber thus giving up that Heidegger wanted to retain? The answer, I take it, is the ideal of the German university as a place in which life and research are harmoniously integrated, a dynamic communal institution with a shared sense of its own substantive, unifying mission.

Recall that on the medieval model of the university, the task of higher education was to transmit a relatively fixed body of knowledge. The French preserved something of this view; universities taught the supposedly established doctrines, while research took place outside the university in non-teaching academies. The French model was appropriated by the German universities preceding Kant, in which the state-sponsored “higher faculties” of law, medicine, and theology were separated from the more independent “lower” faculty of philosophy. Kant personally experienced *The Conflict of the Faculties* of philosophy and theology (after publishing *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*), and his subsequent argument that it is in the best long-term interests of the state for the “philosophy faculty” to be “conceived as free and subject only to laws given by reason” helped inspire Fichte’s philosophical elaboration of an “indigenous [German] alternative to the French model.” At the heart of Fichte’s idea for the new University of Berlin, which Humboldt founded in 1809, was the “scientific” view of research as a dynamic, open-ended endeavor. Research and teaching would now be combined into a single institution of higher-learning, with philosophy at the center of a new proliferation of academic pursuits.<sup>23</sup>

From the beginning, however, one of the major problems concerned how the modern university could maintain the unity of structure and purpose distinctive of the medieval university and thought to be definitive of the *university* as such. German Idealists like Fichte and Schelling believed this unity would follow organically from the *totality* of the system of knowledge. This faith in “the System” proved to be less influential on posterity than Humboldt’s alternative, “humanist” ideal, according to which the university’s unity would come from a shared commitment to the educational formation of character. As Crowell explains, Humboldt’s seminal idea was to link “objective *Wissenschaft* with subjective *Bildung*”; the university would be responsible for forming fully cultured individuals, a requirement Humboldt hoped would serve to guide and unite the disciplines despite the new freedom of research.<sup>24</sup> In historical actuality, however, neither the German Idealists’ reliance on the underlying unity of the scientific subject matter

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<sup>23</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Mary J. Gregor, trans. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Derrida, “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils,” Catherine Porter and Edward P. Morris, trans., *Diacritics* 13 (1983), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Crowell, op. cit., 258.

nor Humboldt's emphasis on a shared commitment to the educational formation of students succeeded in unifying the university community cohesively enough to prevent its fragmentation into increasingly specialized disciplines.

Heidegger's own mature vision of a re-ontologization of education *combines* (his versions of) these two strategies. The university community he envisions would be unified *both* by the mutual recognition among this community that its members are all committed to the same formal pursuit, the ultimately revolutionary task not simply of understanding what *is*, but of seeking to transcend the ontological presuppositions implicitly guiding all the various fields of knowledge, *and* by its shared commitment to forming *excellent* individuals, where "excellence" is understood in terms of a kind of ontological perfectionism in which students learn to develop their distinctive capacity for world-disclosing as they participate in the advancement of science by being taught to question the sciences' guiding ontological presuppositions. (Heidegger's view of the relation between philosophy and science thus plays a crucial role in both strands of his dual strategy for reunifying the university, and we will turn our attention to this view in the next section.) By restoring substance to the notion of excellence and in so doing teaching us "to disclose the essential in all things," Heidegger believed his re-ontologization of education could succeed in "shattering the encapsulation of the sciences in their different disciplines, bringing them back from their boundless and aimless dispersal in individual fields and corners."<sup>25</sup>

Although Heidegger did not elaborate the major features of this positive vision of a re-ontologization of higher education until 1927, important seeds of his mature view can already be found in his work on university education during the early 1920s. As we have seen, these early views contain a surprising and unstable mix of Nietzschean and Weberian elements. It is, however, the quieter presence of a more familiar influence that tips the balance in Nietzsche's favor. For, against Weber, Heidegger adopts the conclusion of Husserl's "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" (1910): Only *Wissenschaft* can close the divide between science and meaning that science itself has opened.<sup>26</sup> Already in 1919, Heidegger rejected Weber's overly rigid separation of life and *Wissenschaft* in order to begin outlining his own long-term plan for "*genuine* university reform":

The renewal of the university means a rebirth of genuine scientific consciousness and life-contexts. But life-relations renew themselves only in a return to the genuine origins of the spirit; as historical phenomena, they require . . . the inner truthfulness of a value-replete, self-cultivating life. Only life, not the noise of overhasty cultural programs, makes "epochs."<sup>27</sup>

This early vision of university renewal relies on a seemingly vitalistic, neo-Nietzschean notion of "value-replete, self-cultivating life," but Heidegger unpacks this appeal to "life" in terms of "the vitality of genuine research." Kisiel glosses Heidegger's point as "philosophy . . . must cut through . . . extant theoretical

<sup>25</sup> See my "Heidegger on Ontological Education"; Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Neske and Kettering, *op. cit.*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, Quentin Lauer, ed. and trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 140-1: "Only science can definitively overcome the need that has its source in science."

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 4/GA56-57, 4-5.

structures in order to find the . . . ‘vital impetus’ which motivates” each scientific discipline.<sup>28</sup> Here Kisiel underemphasizes the romantic-Nietzschean dimension of Heidegger’s project (ignoring, for example, Heidegger’s politically ominous call for a “genuine revolutionizing of the spirit”), but he nicely anticipates Husserlian arguments Heidegger will elaborate in *Being and Time*, where Husserl’s influence temporarily pushes Nietzsche into the background of Heidegger’s thought. Nonetheless, Husserl’s subtle but profound impact on Heidegger’s project for a philosophical revitalization of the university can indeed already be detected in 1919, and not only in the way Kisiel recognizes.

Husserl’s “phenomenological-constitutive consideration” analyzed the way objects are constituted within the temporal flow of experience.<sup>29</sup> Applying this Husserlian approach to a larger scale, Heidegger sought in 1919 to understand the way scientific practices congeal over time around new objects of research, thereby establishing new disciplines or transforming old ones. Recognizing that scientific practices can take years to “genetically consolidate” themselves into new object domains and institutions, Heidegger proclaims this “the task of a *whole generation*.” Thus, although the Nietzschean rhetoric of Heidegger’s early vision for a revitalization of the university is dramatic, he follows Husserl (and the Nietzsche of the second *Untimely Meditation*) by counseling patience and a commitment to the long-term view. Before “*genuine* university reforms” can be expected, the new scientific life-contexts emerging within the university must be given at least a generation of “peace and security” in which to “mature.”<sup>30</sup> By 1924, however, Heidegger’s patience for a gradual, progressive revitalization of the academy is already wearing thin:

The situation of academic disciplines [*Wissenschaften*] and the university has become even more questionable. What happens? Nothing. One writes brochures on the crisis of the academic disciplines, on the calling of science. . . . Today there is even a specialized body of literature on the question of how matters should be. Nothing else happens.<sup>31</sup>

Heidegger seems to realize here that his Nietzschean romanticization of Weber’s ascetic scientific ideal is not actually doing much to revitalize the university. Rather than giving up the project, however, Heidegger will conclude that more active steps need to be taken to restore the university to a leading role within the national culture.

Heidegger’s seemingly unshakeable confidence that he is destined to be a leader of the generation that will transform the university is less surprising if one recalls the way Husserl groomed Heidegger to play just such a dangerous role. In “Phi-

<sup>28</sup> Kisiel, *op. cit.*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger understands the historical emergence of the university institution as an “objective expression” (or organic outgrowth) of the interlocking practices developed by a mutually supporting scientific community. See Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 3–5/GA56–57, 3–6. Cf. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Third Book*, Ted E. Klein and W. E. Pohl, trans., in *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 117; Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 166.

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life,” Peter Preuss, trans. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), esp. 61–4; cf. Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 4, 179, 181; Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” 143.

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 27/GA63, 32–3.

losophy as Rigorous Science,” Husserl presented phenomenology as a “revolution in philosophy” that would “prepare the ground for a future philosophical system.” As Heidegger became Husserl’s heir apparent during the 1920s, he increasingly saw it as his appointed task to develop—atop the ground cleared by Husserl’s phenomenological revolution—the “systematic fundamental science of philosophy, the port of entry to a genuine metaphysics of nature, of spirit, of ideas” for which Husserl called. Unfortunately, in Heidegger’s very fidelity to this incredibly ambitious Husserlian project, he would fail to take to heart Husserl’s prophetic warning of a “great danger.” Because the “spiritual need of our time has, in fact, become unbearable,” Husserl cautioned, “*even a theoretical nature will be capable of giving in to the force of the motive to influence practice more thoroughly than his theoretical vocation would permit.*”<sup>32</sup> To see how Heidegger fell prey to the dangers he and Husserl previously discerned, we need only turn to Heidegger’s early magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927), where he develops his positive views for radical university reform.

### 3. RESTORING PHILOSOPHY TO HER THRONE AS THE QUEEN OF THE SCIENCES (1927 TO 1933)

There can be little doubt that the conception of “authentic historicity” Heidegger presents in ¶74 of *Being and Time* provided the general philosophical framework in terms of which he understood his decision to join the National Socialist “revolution” during the early 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Put simply, Heidegger chose Nietzsche as his “hero” and so sought a historically appropriate way to carry on Nietzsche’s struggle against nihilism.<sup>34</sup> The eagerness with which Heidegger answered Spengler’s Nietzschean call for radical university reform both followed from and reinforced his sense that it was his philosophical “fate”—and so his role in focusing the “destiny” of his generation—to combat the growing problem of historical meaninglessness in this way. If, however, one is interested in grasping the specific philosophical motives that justified, in Heidegger’s mind at least, the actual political initiatives he attempted to enact in 1933 as the Rector of Freiburg University, then the philosophical rubber really hits the political road much earlier in *Being and Time*, in ¶3. Here, without naming Kant, Heidegger rejects Kant’s advice that philosophy’s relation to the other sciences should be that of a “train bearer” (who follows behind, straightening out the tangles), rather than a “torch bearer” (who goes first, lighting the way). Reversing Kant’s humble view, Heidegger instead maintains that philosophy “must run ahead of the positive sciences, and it *can* do so.”<sup>35</sup> Despite its great political importance, Heidegger’s attempt to fulfill Husserl’s ambition to restore philosophy to her throne as the queen of the sciences has

<sup>32</sup> Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” 75, 116–7 n. f, 140, 173 (my emphasis).

<sup>33</sup> Löwith, “My Last Meeting with Heidegger in Rome, 1936,” Richard Wolin, trans., in *The Heidegger Controversy*, Richard Wolin, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 141–3.

<sup>34</sup> I develop this argument in *The End of Ontotheology: Understanding Heidegger’s Turn, Method, and Politics* (University of California, San Diego: philosophy dissertation, 1999). See also Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 30 (hereafter “B&T”); *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 10 (hereafter “S&Z”).

been largely overlooked in the secondary literature on “the Heidegger controversy,” and so is worth examining in some detail.

For Heidegger, every scientific discipline with a discrete subject matter is a “positive science.” The term “positive science” conveys his claim that each scientific discipline rests on an ontological “posit,” a presupposition about what the class of entities it studies *is*. Biology, for example, seeks to understand how living beings function. As biologists successfully accomplish this important task, they allow us to understand in ever greater detail the *logos* of the *bios*, the order and structure of living beings. Nevertheless, Heidegger asserts, biology proper cannot tell us what life *is*. Of course, the biologist must have some understanding of what “life” is, simply in order to be able to pick out the appropriate entities to study. Heidegger maintains, however, that this ontological understanding of “the kind of being which belongs to the living as such” is a presupposition rather than a result of the biologist’s empirical investigations.<sup>36</sup> Heidegger makes the same point with respect to the social and human sciences. Psychology, for example, can tell us a great deal about the functioning of consciousness, the psyche, but, notoriously, it cannot tell us what consciousness *is*. Analogously, historiography greatly increases our understanding of historical events, yet historians cannot tell us what history *is*.

Let us be clear: Heidegger is not claiming that biologists cannot distinguish organic from inorganic entities, that psychologists are unable to differentiate between conscious and non-conscious states, or that historians cannot tell historical events from non-historical ones. His point, rather, is that in making just such fundamental conceptual differentiations, biologists, psychologists, and historians are always already employing an ontological understanding of what the entities whose domain they study *are*. Indeed, no science could get along without at least an implicit ontological understanding of the entities it studies.<sup>37</sup> Simply to *do* historiography, historians must be able to focus on the appropriate objects of study, which means they must already have some understanding of what makes a historical event “historical.” To distinguish those entities from the past that belong in museums from the ones destined for junk heaps, for example, historians rely on an ontological understanding of what makes an entity historical, a sense of what Heidegger calls “the historicity of the historical.” Likewise, botany relies on an ontological understanding of “the vegetable character of plants,” physics on “the corporeality of bodies,” zoology on “the animality of animals,” and anthropology on “the humanness of humanity.”<sup>38</sup> Heidegger’s list could be expanded indefinitely because he believes every positive science presupposes such an ontological posit, a background understanding of the being of the class of entities it studies.

By thus extending Husserl’s claim about the “naïveté” or “inadequacy” of the natural sciences to the positive sciences in general, Heidegger thinks he has found

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, B&T, 30/S&Z, 10; cf. B&T, 75/S&Z, 50.

<sup>37</sup> See David Cerbone, “World, World-Entry, and Realism in Early Heidegger,” *Inquiry* 38 (1995): 410.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, B&T, 31/S&Z, 10; Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, W. Lovitt, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 118. See also Trish Glazebrook, “Heidegger on the Experiment,” *Philosophy Today* 42 (1998): 256.

a way to fulfill Husserl's grand ambition to deliver "the systematic fundamental science of philosophy."<sup>39</sup> How exactly does Heidegger propose to restore philosophy to her throne? His argument can be broken down into three steps, the first of which we have just reconstructed. Building on this first claim that all the positive sciences presuppose an ontological posit, Heidegger declares, second, that there is a basic difference between these positive sciences and the "science" of philosophy:

Ontic sciences in each case thematize a given entity that in a certain manner is always already disclosed *prior* to scientific disclosure. We call the sciences of entities as given—of a *positum*—positive sciences. . . . Ontology, or the science of being, on the other hand, demands a fundamental shift of view: From entities to being.<sup>40</sup>

The positive sciences all study classes of entities, so Heidegger also refers to the positive sciences as "ontic sciences." Philosophy, on the other hand, studies the being of those classes of entities, making philosophy an "ontological science" or, more grandly, a "science of being." Heidegger's second claim, in other words, is that philosophy studies precisely that which the positive sciences take for granted: their ontological posits. The subject matters of the positive sciences and of philosophy are thus distinguished by what Heidegger calls "the ontological difference," the difference between "entities" (*Seienden*) and the "being of entities" (*Sein des Seienden*). Positive sciences study entities of various kinds, while philosophy studies the being of those kinds of entities.<sup>41</sup> Here, then, we have the first two steps in his argument. First, each positive science presupposes an understanding of the being of the class of entities it studies, and second, philosophy concerns itself with precisely these ontological posits.

The third step in Heidegger's argument is his claim that the positive sciences' ontological posits *guide* the scientists' actual investigations. As he writes in 1927, "Philosophy . . . does of its essence have the task of directing all . . . the positive sciences with respect to their ontological foundations." These ontological "basic concepts determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of the area of subject-matter underlying all the objects a science takes as its theme, and all positive science is guided by this understanding."<sup>42</sup> Heidegger's point, I take it, is that a scientist's ontological understanding of what the class of entities she studies *is* impacts not only *what* she studies (which is fairly obvious) but also *how* she studies it (which is perhaps less so). If, for example, contemporary biologists proceed on the basis of an ontological understanding of life as a "self-replicating system," then the entities whose functioning they seek to understand will include not only those self-replicating beings now thought to populate the plant and animal kingdoms, but also such entities as computer viruses, nanotechnology, "electric fish," and other forms of so-called "artificial life." To study such artificial life

<sup>39</sup> Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," 116–7 n. f, and 85: "All natural science is naïve with regard to its point of departure."

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology" (1927), James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo, trans., in Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, William McNeill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41/GA9, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (hereafter "GA27"), 223.

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 53 (cf. 50); Heidegger, B&T, 30/S&Z, 10.

will require, in turn, new modes and models of investigation, such as the observation of “living systems” entirely confined to complex computer simulations.<sup>43</sup>

While this is not a fanciful example, it may seem slightly atypical in that here biology’s guiding ontological “posit” (namely, that “life *is* a self-replicating system”) has been rendered explicit, whereas Heidegger holds that normally such posits function only as background presuppositions of a science’s investigations. Yet Heidegger, anticipating Thomas Kuhn, recognizes that such ontological posits often enter into the foreground of scientific discussion during a crisis in the normal functioning of that science. Indeed, *Being and Time* contends that the “real movement of the sciences” occurs when such crises lead the sciences to subject their guiding ontological understandings to “a revision which is more or less radical and lucid with regard to itself.” During such a crisis, a science often puts its ontological understanding of the being of the class of entities it studies into question, usually settling the crisis only by revising its previous ontological understanding. Those who explicitly recognize and take part in such ontological questioning and revision are doing *philosophy*, Heidegger says, whether or not they happen to be employed by a philosophy department. It is in this sense, I submit, that we need to take Heidegger’s widely misunderstood and so highly controversial claim that science as such “does not think.”<sup>44</sup>

For Heidegger, philosophy is essentially an activity of ontological questioning.<sup>45</sup> One is “philosophizing” whenever one explicitly examines and seeks to clarify the ontological understanding that normally guides a science implicitly. To say that the positive sciences, as such, do not “think” simply means that they do not, as positive sciences, question their guiding ontological presuppositions: “The researcher always operates on the foundation of what has already been decided: the fact that there are such things as nature, history, art, and that these things can be made the subject of consideration.”<sup>46</sup> Of course, scientists do occasionally engage in such potentially revolutionary ontological questioning, but when they do, they are (by Heidegger’s definition) doing philosophy, not research.<sup>47</sup> Thus biologists as well as philosophers of biology were philosophizing when they explicitly questioned the ontological understanding of what life *is* during the recent debates over “artificial life.” Conversely, philosophy is “only alive and actual” when engaged in the ontological questioning at the center of such scientific crises. Philosophers (and others) *philosophize* only by doing the potentially revolutionary work of questioning the ontological presuppositions that guide the natural, social, and human sciences. Hence the Husserlian concept of a “scientific philosophy,” Heidegger proclaims in 1928, is like the concept of a “circular sphere”: Not

<sup>43</sup> See Margaret A. Boden, ed., *The Philosophy of Artificial Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, GA27, 226. Cf. Heidegger, “Martin Heidegger in Conversation,” in Neske and Kettering, op. cit., 83; Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, F. May and R. Askay, trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 30, 57, 75–6, 122–4.

<sup>45</sup> Heidegger, GA27, 21–2, 25.

<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, B&T, 29/S&Z, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger recognized that “the present leaders of atomic physics, Niels Bohr and [Werner] Heisenberg, think in a thoroughly philosophical way” (Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, W. B. Barton, Jr., and Vera Deutsch, trans. [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1969], 67/*Die Frage nach dem Ding* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953], 51).



simply redundant, for as a sphere is more circular than any circle, so “philosophizing” is “more scientific than any possible science.” Indeed, strictly speaking, “philosophy is *not* science, . . . but rather the *origin* [*Ursprung*] of science.”<sup>48</sup> Science “springs from” philosophy in a way that resembles the emergence of normal science from revolutionary science, namely, through an eventual routinization and procedural exploration of the ontological insights gained philosophically during a period of revolutionary science.

To practice philosophy so conceived, *Being and Time* explains, is “to interpret entities in terms of the basic constitution of their being.” By focusing on a positive science’s guiding ontological presuppositions, philosophy can clarify the ontological posits of the positive sciences and so transform and guide the course of their future development. Thus Heidegger writes:

Laying the foundations for the sciences in this way is different in principle from the kind of [Kantian] “logic” which limps along behind, investigating the status of some science as it chances to find it, in order to discover its “method.” Laying the foundations . . . is rather a productive logic—in the sense that it leaps ahead, as it were, into a particular region of being, discloses it for the first time in its constitutive being, and makes the structures acquired thereby available to the positive sciences as lucid directives for their inquiry.<sup>49</sup>

By clarifying the positive sciences’ guiding ontological posits, philosophy plays a foundational role with respect to the other sciences, proactively guiding their development, even issuing “lucid directives for their inquiry.” In this way, Heidegger believes philosophy can reclaim its historic role as “torch-bearer” of the sciences. But toward what end will philosophy light the way? In which direction does he seek to guide the sciences, the university, Germany?

As such questioning reminds us, Heidegger’s attempted restoration of philosophy to her throne sounds, under a less flattering description, like a kind of *philosophical imperialism*. Such an impression would seem to be reinforced by the idea that the positive sciences as such can neither account for nor supply their own guiding ontological posits, but must take these over from philosophy. Recall, however, that Heidegger’s view does not entail a subordination of scientists to philosophers, since, as we have seen, he does not conceive of the philosophizing that guides science as the exclusive provenance of any particular academic department. Scientists too can philosophize; indeed Heidegger strongly urges that they should. His Rectoral Address lays great stress on the need for scientists to philosophize, since he thinks that when “the faculties and disciplines get the essential and simple questions of their science underway,” this will bring “down disciplinary barriers” and “transform the faculties and the disciplines from within.”<sup>50</sup> Still, the underlying worry remains: Given Heidegger’s strong emphasis on the importance of cross-disciplinary philosophical questioning and his assurance that such ontological questioning will transform the scientific disciplines from within, revitalizing and reunifying fragmented academic departments, how does one ex-

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, GA27, 17–8, 221, 226. Heidegger reaffirms this view in 1966: “Phenomenology is more of a science than natural science is” (Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 124, 211).

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, B&T, 30–31/S&Z, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” 36–7. On the differences between Heidegger and Kuhn, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 279–80.

plain the authoritarian character of some of the actual reforms he sought to impose during his brief tenure as the *Führer-Rektor* of Freiburg University—including, most notably, his proposal to abolish academic freedom and his seeming readiness to reorganize the departmental divisions of the university immediately, by philosophical fiat if necessary?

To begin to answer this question, we must understand several further aspects of Heidegger's view. At the time he wrote *Being and Time*, Heidegger believed that the various ontological presuppositions guiding the different positive sciences were not all distinct and irreducible. Instead he held, first, that the positive sciences' guiding understandings of the being of life, history, the psyche, and so on, all reduce down to a small number of what he calls "regional ontologies," and second, that these regional ontologies are all grounded in a single common foundation, what *Being and Time* calls a "fundamental ontology," that is, an understanding of "the meaning of being in general."<sup>51</sup> Taken together, these two claims entail that the different ontological posits implicitly guiding the positive sciences all stem from a common ontological source. A fundamental ontology underlies the regional ontologies, which themselves underlie the positive sciences' various ontological posits. Thus Heidegger writes that "it is integral to the positive character of a science that its pre-scientific comportment toward whatever is given (nature, history, economy, space, number) is . . . already illuminated and guided by an understanding of being, even if this understanding of being is not conceptualized" explicitly.<sup>52</sup> What, then, is this fundamental ontology that ultimately underlies and implicitly guides all the positive sciences? It takes Heidegger most of the decade after *Being and Time* to answer unequivocally this difficult but crucial question.

*Being and Time* famously calls for a "deconstruction" (*Destruktion*) of the history of ontology by which Heidegger believes he will be able to recover the fundamental understanding of being that has shaped every subsequent ontology in the history of the West. This idea that a transhistorically binding ontology can be discovered "beneath" Western history helps explain the more authoritarian dimension of Heidegger's Rectoral Address. For if a philosophical vision that recognized that and how all the different ontological posits fit together into a fundamental ontology could reunify the university (and, behind it, the nation), then Heidegger, as the unique possessor of just such a vision, would be the natural spiritual leader of the university. Clearly, then, Heidegger's neo-Husserlian ambition to restore philosophy to her former glory helped fuel his political vision for the revitalization of the German University. Such political defects in Heidegger's Rectoral Address now seem glaringly obvious. The main *philosophical* problem, however, is that Heidegger got ahead of himself here. For he had not yet actually worked out

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger, B&T, 227/S&Z, 183. For a clear account of Heidegger's slightly confused understanding of "fundamental ontology," see Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 65–7. Cf. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, W. R. Boyce Gibson, trans. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 59–62.

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 42/GA9, 50. Cf. Heidegger, B&T, 31/S&Z, 11: "The question of being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and, in so doing, already operate with an understanding of being, but also for the possibility of those [regional] ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations."

how the ontological posits fit into the regional ontologies, or how the regional ontologies fit into an underlying fundamental ontology, *before* he assumed this mantle of political leadership. It is in this sense that despite Husserl's warning, Heidegger did indeed give "in to the force of the motive to influence practice more thoroughly than his theoretical vocation would permit." In 1933 Heidegger was still in the process of working out his view of the way in which an underlying ontology gave rise to the different ontological posits, and when he does, the details of the view undermine rather than support the authoritarian elements of his political project.

In *Being and Time* and in the 1929 "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger singles out the ontological classes of "nature" and "history" as "regional ontologies."<sup>53</sup> By 1935, he has traced the regional ontologies of nature and history back to the pre-Socratic conceptions of *phusis* and *alêtheia*, respectively. By 1941, he will explicitly characterize this "*phusis-alêtheia*" couple as "the inceptive essence of being," that is, as the first way Western thinkers conceptualized "being." Already in 1937, however, he begins re-describing such "being" as a never fully conceptualizable phenomenological "presencing" (*Anwesen*) that, owing to its non-static and non-substantive nature, cannot (unlike the "permanent presence" [*Anwesenheit*] he expected to find) be the "meaning of being in general."<sup>54</sup> Between 1929 and 1937, that is, during the period of intense philosophical tension and transformation popularly known as Heidegger's "turn" (or *Kehre*), he came to realize that there was no substantive fundamental ontology waiting beneath history to be recovered. When Heidegger traces the regional ontologies of nature and history back to *phusis* and *alêtheia*, then traces this *phusis-alêtheia* couple back to a conceptually inexhaustible ontological "presencing," this is as close as he ever comes to actually "grounding" the regional ontologies in a fundamental ontology, and it is quite instructive. For it shows that the relations between the positive sciences, the regional ontologies, and fundamental ontology are too murky and indirect to allow for a top-down hierarchical reorganization of the university in which the philosopher who has learned to be receptive to phenomenological presencing will be able first to carve the regional ontologies out of this basic fundamental ontological presencing and then construct the new academic disciplines around these regional ontologies. In other words, had Heidegger worked out these views a few years earlier, in 1933 instead of 1937, they would have undermined some of the authoritarian policies of his Rectoral Address, such as his seeming readiness immediately to legislate new academic disciplines from on high (instead of giving new disciplines "at least a generation" to develop). Ironically, Heidegger thus il-

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?," David Farrell Krell, trans., in Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 95. In the Rectoral Address, Heidegger adds "language" to this group, a category meant to map onto his understanding of the pre-Socratic *logos*.

<sup>54</sup> See Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, trans. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 107; Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, Joan Stambaugh, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 10; *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 409; Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 173, 210; *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt a.-M.: Klostermann, 1989), 245, 297; see also my "The Philosophical Fugue: Understanding the Structure and Goal of Heidegger's *Beiträge*," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 34 (2003): 57–73.

lustrates the real dangers he and Husserl had presciently cautioned against; he allowed “external entanglements” to interfere with his philosophical development and so gave in to the temptation to intercede politically before having worked out the philosophical views that would have legitimated or, more to the point, *undermined* such an engagement. What, then, did Heidegger learn from this mistake?

Dropping the very notions of “fundamental ontology” and “regional ontologies” from his later work, Heidegger instead builds his mature understanding of university education on the idea that “ontotheologies” (rather than regional ontologies) mediate between a basic ontological “presencing” and the guiding ontological presuppositions of the positive sciences. Whatever its political motivations, this is essentially a philosophical lesson. For when Heidegger actually carries out the deconstruction of the history of ontology called for in *Being and Time*, he discovers that a series of metaphysical “ontotheologies” have temporarily grounded and justified a succession of ontological “epochs,” historical constellations of intelligibility. Every age in the West has been unified by such a basic metaphysical understanding of what and how beings are, he concludes. So the ontological posits guiding each of *our* positive sciences come not from some fundamental ontology beneath Western history, but rather from our contemporary age’s reigning ontotheology. Heidegger would thus hold that contemporary biology, for example, takes over its implicit ontological understanding of what life *is* from the metaphysical understanding of the being of entities that governs our own Nietzschean epoch of “enframing.” And indeed, one has to admit that when contemporary philosophers of biology proclaim that life *is* a self-replicating system, it certainly appears that they have unknowingly adopted the basic ontological presupposition of Nietzsche’s metaphysics, according to which life *is* ultimately the eternal recurrence of will to power, that is, sheer will-to-will, unlimited self-augmentation.<sup>55</sup> Since the later Heidegger believes all of the sciences’ guiding ontological posits are implicitly taken over from this nihilistic Nietzschean ontotheology, the first task of his mature understanding of *ontological education* involves making us reflective about the way in which our experience of what is commonly called “reality” has been shaped by the fundamental conceptual parameters and ultimate standards of legitimacy provided by Nietzsche’s metaphysics. When we become aware of the way our age’s reigning ontotheology shapes our understanding of ourselves and our worlds—recognizing the subtle but pervasive influence of this ontological understanding of entities as mere resources to be optimized—we begin to open up the possibility of understanding ourselves otherwise than in these nihilistic, Nietzschean terms.<sup>56</sup>

In 1933, however, Heidegger was still “on the way” to clearly articulating these mature views, and, not surprisingly, he had little success convincing audiences to follow a philosophical leadership they could barely understand. This lack of un-

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<sup>55</sup> It is alarming (but predictable, given Heidegger’s critique of our epoch’s reliance on an unnoticed ontotheology) to find philosophers of biology unknowingly extending the logic of Nietzschean metaphysics in such a way as to attribute “life” to the computer virus, the cybernetic entity *par excellence*.

<sup>56</sup> I develop this interpretation in “Heidegger on Ontological Education” and in “Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger’s *Destruktion* of Metaphysics,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8 (2000): 297–327, as well as in “What’s Wrong with Being a Technological Essentialist? A Response to Feenberg,” *Inquiry* 43 (2000): 429–44.

derstanding was disastrous politically, for it allowed Heidegger to appear to be endorsing a regime he was in fact attempting to philosophically contest and redirect.<sup>57</sup> So, if the views Heidegger began working out in 1937 would have undermined authoritarian aspects of his Rectoral Address, how far does this take us toward answering the Confucian question with which we began? To get to the crux of this question, we need to ask: Would Heidegger's claim that the sciences take their ontological pre-understandings over from a subterranean ontotheology—one that they need to learn to use the methods of Heideggerian phenomenology in order to recognize, contest, and transcend—still have helped convince him to institute a philosophical version of the *Führer-Prinzip* at Freiburg University? Here we need to admit that Heidegger's later views could indeed have justified the core of the politico-philosophical program he advanced in the Rectoral Address. For if one examines "The Self-Assertion of the German University" carefully, the role of the Rector (as Heidegger presents it there) is to unify the university around the various disciplines' shared commitment to ontological questioning. I believe the later Heidegger would modify this program primarily by *refining* it, focusing such potentially revolutionary ontological questioning more precisely on the nihilistic Nietzschean ontotheology that, he came to realize, the various university disciplines already implicitly shared. Thus the goal would no longer be the Rectoral Address's neo-Nietzschean pursuit of ontological revolution simply for the sake of revitalization. (By 1938–39, Heidegger will realize that this Nietzschean strategy of constant overcoming follows from Nietzsche's nihilistic metaphysics and so is part of the problem.) The basic strategy, nevertheless, would likely remain the same: First, awaken the faculty to the way in which their research is grounded in unquestioned ontological presuppositions, then send these researchers out to the ontological frontiers of knowledge, so to speak, in order that they might discover ways of understanding the being of the classes of entities they study otherwise than in terms of this underlying Nietzschean ontotheology. The core of the Rectoral Address's research program would be preserved in such an attempt to enlist the entire academy in the philosophical struggle to transcend the nihilistic ontotheology of the age. Such a project is deeply consistent with Heidegger's lifelong philosophical goal, although it is not clear that one would need the full authority of a *Führer-Rektor*—rather than, say, a powerful university president or even an influential funding agency—in order to awaken the university community to their possible role in fomenting such an ontohistorical revolution.

I would add, finally, that the single most troublingly authoritarian aspect of Heidegger's Rectoral Address, namely his infamous rejection of "academic freedom," is at best tangentially related to the underlying philosophical views we have been examining. In fact, Heidegger's oft-lamented discarding of academic freedom in the Rectoral Address can be much better understood if we remember that historically a great deal of the blame for the fragmentation of the modern university of Fichte and Humboldt was placed on the new academic freedoms this university introduced. This is precisely the argument advanced by the twenty-seven year-old Nietzsche in his important but often overlooked inaugural lectures *On*

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<sup>57</sup> See Frank Edler, "Philosophy, Language, Politics: Heidegger's Attempt to Steal the Language of Revolution in 1933–34," *Social Research* 57 (1990): 197–238.

*the Future of Our Educational Institutions. Lehrfreiheit and Lernfreiheit*, the freedoms to teach and to pursue an individual course of study, have undermined the university's unifying mission of forming young minds, but Nietzsche proposes that a sufficiently robust notion of *Bildung* could accomplish "a rejuvenation, a reviviscence, and a refining of the spirit of Germany," so that "our educational institutions may also be indirectly remolded and born again." This educational renaissance will require a revolution, Nietzsche proclaims. One must "dare to break with all that exists at present," because "the present system is a scandal and a disgrace."

Complaining that "philosophy itself has been banished from the universities" as a result of the new academic freedoms, Nietzsche issues a zealous summons for the cultural leadership of a philosophical genius:

For I repeat it, my friends! All *Bildung* begins with the very opposite of that which is now so highly esteemed as 'academic freedom': *Bildung* begins with obedience, subordination, discipline, and subjection. Just as great leaders need followers, so those who are led need the leader [*der Führer*]*—*a certain reciprocal disposition prevails here in the hierarchy of spirits: Yea, a kind of pre-established harmony. This eternal order, toward which all things tend, is always threatened by that pseudo-culture which now sits on the throne of the present. It endeavors either to bring the leaders down to the level of its own servitude, or else cast them out altogether. It seduces the followers when they are seeking their predestined leader, and overcomes them by the fumes of its narcotics. When, however, in spite of all this, leader and followers have at last met, wounded and sore, there is an impassioned feeling of rapture, like the echo of an ever-sounding lyre.<sup>58</sup>

Nietzsche allows this ominous note to reverberate for another three paragraphs, then breaks off these early lectures. Although Nietzsche had the good sense to suppress their publication (citing his lack of a "clear conscience"), Heidegger—who visited the Nietzsche archives several times before joining the commission responsible for a critical edition of Nietzsche's works in 1935 (with a group of scholars that included Alfred Bäumler, a Nietzschean who shared Heidegger's radical belief in the necessity of a revolutionary transformation of the university)—would undoubtedly have read these highly relevant pages eagerly. Indeed, it seems likely that Nietzsche's virulent critique of academic freedom and his call for a "great *Führer*" to lead this revolution of the university exercised a strong and regrettable influence on the program for university reform Heidegger set forth in the Rectoral Address. Those seeking to understand Heidegger's famous later complaint that "Nietzsche ruined me! [*Nietzsche hat mich kaputt gemacht!*]" might do well to consider these lectures.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, J. M. Kennedy, trans., in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 6, Oscar Levy, ed. (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1909), 5, 10, 41, 108, 130, 140–1. Nietzsche's call for a return of "that earnest, manly, stern and daring German spirit; that spirit of the miner's son, Luther" (138) would have appealed to the young Heidegger, who strove to do for philosophy what Luther had done for religion. See Derrida, "Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," Avital Ronell, trans., in Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, Christie V. McDonald, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 28.

<sup>59</sup> See Derrida, "Otobiographies," 25; Walter Benjamin, "*Nietzsche und das Archiv seiner Schwester*," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, Hella Tiedmann-Bartels, ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Let us return once again to the Confucian question with which we began: Did Heidegger learn from his failed excursion into university politics and so transform the underlying philosophical views that motivated it? I mentioned at the beginning that Pöggeler and Derrida both think so. By way of a conclusion, let us now examine their interpretations.

Pöggeler claims that Heidegger's recently published notes (from a reading group Heidegger organized on the "threat" of politicized science in 1937–38) show that "Heidegger finally sees the quest for university reform, set forth in the questionable thoughts of 1933, to be an illusion." Pöggeler's contention that by 1938 Heidegger had seen through the "illusion" of his quixotic "quest" for university reform is intriguing but difficult to substantiate, since both Pöggeler's interpretation and the note it is based on are problematically vague. What exactly did Heidegger come to see as an illusion? Apparently not the idea that the university should be reformed, since Pöggeler's sole clarifying remark (namely, that Heidegger "finds the threat of science to lie in the fact that mere specialists perform their work without conviction, and so are defenseless against manipulation by the state and are enlisted in the struggle for world domination") shows that in 1938 Heidegger was still sharpening the very critique of the university that motivated his quest to reform it.<sup>60</sup> So what Heidegger retracts, then, are the "questionable" proposals for reforming the university advanced in his Rectoral Address? As it stands, this claim is too general. Are we to believe Heidegger subsequently rejected all the philosophical ideas for university reform outlined in his Rectoral Address? Although Heidegger risks suggesting this in a private note Pöggeler draws on, there is no evidence for it in his later work, and it is difficult for those of us sympathetic to aspects of his strategy to believe this could be the case.<sup>61</sup> But if Heidegger does not reject his reform proposals *tout court*, then which were the dubious ones? And why did he come to think them illusory?

<sup>60</sup> Pöggeler, *op. cit.*, 50. I develop both Heidegger's critique of the university and his positive response in "Heidegger on Ontological Education."

<sup>61</sup> The crucial "excerpt" (*Auszug*) from Heidegger's notes reads: "So, was that first approach to 'Self-Assertion,' that is, the desire to return to *questioning* as the center of a new structural formation, an illusion [or "error," *Irrtum*]? Indeed—an *error* in all possible ways, and at the same time an ignorance about the actual drives and machinations of those groups and interests vying for political power (Heidegger, "Die Bedrohung der Wissenschaft," Dietrich Papenfuss and Otto Pöggeler, eds., *Zur Philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers* [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989], 23). This seeming *mea culpa* is misleading; notice that even when Heidegger criticizes his Rectoral Address in such strong and general terms, his *concrete* explanations show he believed the problem to be that he had misread the external political situation and so had been prevented (by the "machinations" of various "groups and interests") from putting his reforms into effect. Following this same pattern, Heidegger adds in another of these notes: "While I was Rector I truly made many and great mistakes [*Fehler*]; yet, when he enumerates "the two greatest mistakes," these turn out to be, first, that he did not reckon with the "mean-spiritedness" of his "so-called colleagues" or "the characterless betrayals of the student body," and second, that he did not know that "one must not even approach a Ministry [of Education] with creative demands and far-reaching goals" (24). If the "error" was Heidegger's "first approach" (namely, the attempt to unify the university by focusing the disciplines on their shared commitment to ontological questioning), this both cuts against Derrida (as we will see) and suggests Heidegger's desire for a *second* approach, one which would focus such potentially revolutionary ontological questioning on the nihilistic metaphysical postulates the various university disciplines already implicitly share.

On these crucial questions Pöggeler remains silent. Still, his way of framing the issue suggests that what Heidegger rejected in 1938 was the *politicization* of the university. Now, “politicization” standardly refers to the Nazi attempt to transform the university into a standing reserve of intellectual and material resources for the German war machine. The lesson Heidegger would have learned from the failure of his Rectorate, then, would be that he should not have subordinated the university to the war effort. If this were Pöggeler’s interpretation, that would mean he accepts the view—currently championed by Richard Wolin and others—that Heidegger’s Rectoral Address, “The Self-Assertion [*Selbstbehauptung*, literally “Self-Heading”] of the German University,” actually represented “The Self-Beheading [*Selbstenthauptung*] of the German University,” as Karl Löwith famously quipped. The problem with such a view, however, is that Heidegger opposed this Nazi politicization of science in his Rectoral Address, and so could not have come to reject a view he never held. The Rectoral Address objects that the Nazi demand for a “politicized science” would reduce the German university to an “arsenal of useful knowledge and values,” merely another instrument in the war effort, a stockpile of potential weapons research and political propaganda.<sup>62</sup> Heidegger clearly meant the Rectoral Address’s much-maligned title, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” to be heard as a refusal of this Nazi call for such a politicization of science. Of course, Heidegger’s argument against reducing the university to a means in the war effort bears only a superficial resemblance to Kant’s argument that the pursuit of knowledge requires a neutrality the state infringes to its own long-term detriment. For Heidegger, the university cannot be a means in the National Socialist war effort because only the university can provide National Socialism with its legitimate—and *legitimizing*—end, the historico-philosophical mission in whose terms alone the “revolution” can be justified. What is needed, Heidegger provocatively implies in 1933, is not a politicization of *Wissenschaft*, but rather, a scientization of the *polis* (so to speak), a becoming-knowledgeable of Germany. The university will lead this charge, and Heidegger will lead the university.

So, when Pöggeler somewhat misleadingly implies that Heidegger later rejected the *politicization* of the university, I suspect what he really means is that Heidegger finally gave up his belief that the university should play such a fundamental political role in the Nazi movement. That this is the case is suggested by Pöggeler’s assertion (in another essay in *The Paths of Heidegger’s Life and Thought*) that “for a short period it really was Heidegger’s intention to revolutionize the universities in order for the first time to give the National Socialist revolution an intellectual basis.”<sup>63</sup> Pöggeler’s idea, then, is that by 1938 Heidegger reversed himself, rejecting his earlier view that the university should shape the “revolution” by providing Nazism with a genuine “intellectual basis.” Here we need to proceed carefully. It is certainly true that by 1937 Heidegger had realized that those in power never took his “private National Socialism” seriously, and so had given up his 1933 hope to guide the National Socialist movement into a “second and more profound awak-

<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” 9/GA16, 112.

<sup>63</sup> Pöggeler, op. cit., 136 (my emphasis). Cf. Christopher Fynsk, “But Suppose We Were to Take the Rectorial Address Seriously . . . Gérard Granel’s *De l’université*,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–5 (1992): 344.



ening.”<sup>64</sup> By 1937 Heidegger knew “the moment” had passed in which it might be possible to redirect the political movement into the service of the ontological revolution he never stopped pursuing. Nevertheless, for this very reason, Pöggeler is wrong if he thinks Heidegger learned any deep and lasting political lesson here. For Heidegger later clung to the idea that a philosophical redirection of the National Socialist movement had at one point been possible, and he never abandoned the philosophical project he had once hoped to use this political movement to advance. This we can see not only in the details of his often-repeated exculpatory narrative (for instance, in his claim that if only others had not been too high-minded to get their hands dirty, things could have turned out differently), it is also made obvious by the notorious fact that, in 1953, he could still unabashedly refer to what in 1935 had seemed to him to be the “inner truth and greatness of National Socialism.” In this respect, Heidegger was never truly disabused of what Hannah Arendt recognized as his astounding political naïveté. Yet, before simply condemning the arrogance of Heidegger’s dream of becoming the “spiritual leader standing next to the political leader” (as Sluga reformulates Jaspers’s famous phrase), let us also remember Martin Buber’s prescient 1927 remark: “Certainly the people that has no leader is unfortunate, but thrice unfortunate is the people whose leader has no teacher.”<sup>65</sup>

Heidegger realized by 1937 that it was too late to redirect the National Socialist movement into an ontological revolution, but did he also give up on his long-cherished dream of radically reforming the university, transforming higher education so that it would serve his philosophical cause? Pöggeler clearly thinks so, but one last bit of evidence is particularly telling against this interpretation. In the paper Heidegger actually delivered in 1937 to the natural science and medical faculties at Freiburg University on “The Threat of Science” (in remarks made publicly, not merely private notes), he provocatively asserts that “the university is coming to an end.” From these dramatic words it might sound as if Heidegger has simply given up on the university, but his point, heard in context, is in fact nearly the opposite: The German university is self-destructing owing to its politicization by the Nazi regime, but this implosion of the politicized university now provides an opportunity to renew the university’s true philosophical mission. Thus Heidegger adds: “It is neither unfortunate nor fortunate that the university is coming to an end; rather it is only a necessity, and one long in the making. The fact that this day is coming is given to us now as an opportunity for reform.”<sup>66</sup> As these words show, Heidegger was still agitating for his own distinctive variety of radical university reform in 1937, in the very text Pöggeler cites as evidence that Heidegger had given up his quest to transform the university.

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<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, 13 March 1933 letter to Elisabeth Blochmann, Frank Edler, trans., *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–5 (1992): 571.

<sup>65</sup> Heidegger, “The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts,” in Neske and Kettering, op. cit., 19; Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 213; Arendt, “For Martin Heidegger’s Eightieth Birthday,” in Neske and Kettering, op. cit.; Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 177; Martin Buber, “People and Leader,” *Pointing the Way*, Maurice Friedman, trans. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1990), 148.

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, “*Die Bedrohung der Wissenschaft*,” 25.

The interpretation advanced by Derrida strikes closer to the mark, although he too exaggerates Heidegger's break with the university. Derrida's provocative "hypothesis" is that after Heidegger's Rectoral Address in 1933,

the enclosure of the university—as a common place and powerful contract with the state, with the public, with knowledge, with metaphysics and technology—will seem to him less and less capable of matching a more essential responsibility, one which, before having to answer for knowledge, power, or something or other determinate, or to respond as a being or determinate object in the face of a determinate subject, must first respond *to Being*, *from* the call of Being, and must ponder this coresponsibility.

Up through 1933, in other words, Heidegger sought to make the university responsible for explicitly comprehending the dramatic historical transformations then taking place. Heidegger viewed the university as a privileged site for such an analysis, since he held that "questioning must be posed . . . from the essential position of the existence [*Dasein*] that questions," and the university is positioned at the intersection of the very forces whose history-transforming collision Heidegger thought it should seek to comprehend, namely: the state, the people (*Volk*), technology, metaphysics, and science or knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) itself.<sup>67</sup> Because Heidegger adopts such a *wissenschaftlicher* approach, he can be understood as extending the ambitious pedagogical agenda of the German Idealists and Humboldt (as we have seen). Derrida thus recognizes a certain tragic nobility in the Rectoral Address:

Heidegger's discourse on the self-affirmation of the German university undoubtedly represents, in the tradition of [Kant's] *The Conflict of the Faculties* and the great philosophical texts concerning the University of Berlin (Schelling, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Humboldt, Hegel), the last great discourse in which the Western university tries to ponder its essence and its destination in terms of responsibility, with a stable reference to the one idea of knowledge, technology, the state and the nation, up to the very limit where a memorial gathering of thought makes a sudden sign toward the entirely-other of a terrifying future.

As this "terrifying future" came to pass, Heidegger realized that such a "determinate" responsibility (the responsibility of *knowing*, as it were) must be preceded by a "more essential responsibility . . . *to being*" (that is, to ontological *questioning*), the "abysal ground" of knowing, and this, Derrida maintains, is a responsibility to which the university could not measure up. As an institution dedicated to knowing, to providing determinate answers to pressing historical questions, the university can neither measure up to nor contain Heidegger's *question* of being.

If Derrida were right that the later Heidegger rejects the university as a focal site for the transformation of human existence, this might be edifying for politically beleaguered "left Heideggerians," left-wing philosophers deeply influenced by the later Heidegger who too often stand accused of taking their inspiration from an "unrepentant fascist." Indeed, it would perhaps be edifying for Derrida himself most of all, not only because he has often been the main target of such dubious political attacks, but also because, although his critics do not yet seem to have recognized this, Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger's critique of the university did much to inspire that institutional alternative to the university Derrida

<sup>67</sup> Derrida, "Mochlos; or, The Conflict of the Faculties," 8; Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," 167/GA9, 103.

himself co-founded in Paris (in 1983, but in the spirit of May 1968): The International College of Philosophy.<sup>68</sup> If there is thus a great deal riding on Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger's critique of the university, there are also good philosophical reasons to be skeptical about Derrida's interpretation. While Derrida's hermeneutic equation of "being" with "questioning" rehabilitates Heidegger's critique of the university, allowing Heidegger to serve as the prime inspiration for an international college dedicated to radical questioning, this equation rests heavily on Heidegger's famous claim that "questioning is the piety of thought," and thus risks being toppled by important passages in which the later Heidegger stresses that there is something more basic than questioning, since questioning always takes place against the background of a previous answer or "prior claim" (*Zusage*).<sup>69</sup> What Derrida's equation misses is the specificity of Heidegger's later questioning; the "prior claim" Heidegger seeks to question is precisely that answer always already supplied by metaphysics—which means, for us, Nietzsche's ontotheological understanding of all entities as eternally recurring will to power. My intention, of course, is not to advance some ill-founded political attack on the philosophical inspirations of the International College of Philosophy (an admirable institution that has successfully nurtured some of the most original radical critique of our day), but simply to examine Derrida's answer to the Confucian question with which we began.

Derrida holds that after the Rectoral Address, Heidegger realized that the university could no longer serve as a catalytic site for ontohistorical transformation. I would say instead that although the later Heidegger no longer thinks the university *sufficient* to bring about the ontohistorical revolution he continued working philosophically to envision and achieve, he does not give up trying to transform education in general—and thus, by implication, university education as well. It is true that after 1937 Heidegger discusses the university much less frequently, but these very discussions show that he remained true to his vision of university reform. The attempt philosophically to re-conceive education remains an underlying focus of important later texts (such as "Plato's Teaching on Truth" [1940] and *What Is Called Thinking?* [1951–52]), and the later Heidegger often reiterates the underlying philosophical views motivating this pedagogical project, even when he does not draw that connection explicitly.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the later

<sup>68</sup> See Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Philosophy I*, Jan Plug, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1–66, 186–92.

<sup>69</sup> See Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 129–36, n. 5; John Sallis, "Flight of Spirit," in *Of Derrida, Heidegger, and Spirit*, David Wood, ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 127–32. Cf. Derrida, *Without Alibi*, Peggy Kamuf, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 301 n. 2 (see also 210).

<sup>70</sup> See my "Heidegger on Ontological Education" for detailed examples. On "thinking" and the "university," see also Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, J. Glenn Gray, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), esp. 12–8, 33–4, 134–7; Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language," Wanda Gregory, trans., *Journal of Philosophical Research* 23 (1998): 130. As Parvis Emad correctly observes, "Heidegger maintained his relationship to the university up to the last years of his life" (Emad, "A Conversation on Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie* with Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann," in *Phenomenology: Japanese and American*, Burt C. Hopkins, ed. [Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997], 145).

Heidegger ceaselessly seeks to expand the parameters of the ontological education he sought to install at the heart of the university, and thus to broaden the educational situation beyond the boundaries of the university. Hence, not only does Heidegger return to the university in 1951–52 for a succinct presentation of his thought, he also communicates this thinking to businesspeople in Bremen, townspeople in Messkirch, psychiatrists in Switzerland, artists in Rome, and philosophers in Germany, France, Japan, and America—to name some of the groups the later Heidegger sought to *educate* philosophically. To the end, then, Heidegger never gives up the fundamental project that led him to believe that the university might serve to help set off a history transforming philosophical revolution, nor does he stop trying to reform education as an integral part of this revolutionary philosophical project.<sup>71</sup>

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