

that we can't see objects by seeing their shadows, it would be much harder to understand how it is that – as was mentioned earlier – top-lit objects are typically so much easier for us to see and recognize than bottom-lit ones. Their shadows are much more important than their outlines or colours in this regard. In fact, it is perfectly possible to depict a visually recognizable object by depicting *only* its shadows – for example, in a charcoal sketch of a human face, or in a grey-tone painting of a white cloth with many folds and creases in it.

Curiously enough, Sorensen denies that we can *feel* shadows – so that talk of 'feeling a cool shade' cannot, according to him, be construed as literally being true – on the grounds that temperature is possessed only by things containing molecules in motion, being 'defined' as their average kinetic energy (118). This, as far as I can tell, is one of Sorensen's few slips of a purely scientific nature, since modern physics apparently allows that even the *vacuum* has a temperature. Sorensen also denies that shadows can have any colour other than *black*, contending that we need to distinguish shadows themselves from the 'light pollution' that may sometimes penetrate and fill them, rather as extraneous matter may sometimes penetrate and fill a hole in a material object. Sorensen coins a snappy new word, 'filtow', for the kind of body of coloured light, produced by a filter, that may, according to him, overlap or even coincide with a shadow.

Sorensen's book is certainly fascinating and richly thought-provoking. It discusses many intriguing topics that I have not even been able to touch upon. Much of what he says may well induce doubt and even incredulity, at least on a first reading. But he argues carefully and clearly in favour of his key claims, all of which merit very serious consideration, even if they sometimes provoke one to construct and defend alternative views. That, however, is surely the hallmark of the very best kind of philosophy writing. *Seeing Dark Things* is a model of this kind.

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Revolutionary Saints: Heidegger, National Socialism, and Antinomian Politics,

By C. Rickey

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Revolutionary Saints presents a reading of the work of Heidegger in the 1920s and '30s. Rickey argues that Heidegger's 'predominant

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concern was finding and articulating an authentically religious stance towards the world' (7) and that that concern informs, among other things, his involvement with the Nazi regime. There are a number of important studies available that explore religious aspects of Heidegger's thought and a host that explore his politics, but Rickey's is one of the very few that do both.

It is now quite widely recognized that theological concerns shape Heidegger's thought in the years leading up to the publication of *Being and Time*, years during which he immersed himself in the work of Scotus, Aquinas, Luther, Augustine and Paul, among others. But this view, which Rickey promotes and which is surely correct, is often associated with two other views, both of which Rickey attacks: (i) that while such theological concerns may have set Heidegger upon his track and reasserted themselves to some degree in his later reflections, their influence on his mature early work is much less significant and (ii) that to recognize the religious inspiration behind Heideggerian 'authenticity' is to recognize that 'ideal' as concerning a person's 'inner life'.

In the background here is the long-standing worry that *Being and Time* is subject to the influence of two incompatible forces: crudely put, an 'individualising' force – manifest in the discussion of authenticity, where we are called upon to resist the influence of 'the They' – and a 'counter-individualising' force – manifest in the discussion of Being-in-the-world and Being-with-others, where we human beings are presented as essentially constituted by our involvement with the world around us and with the community of others that populate that world. Rickey responds to this tension by arguing that Heidegger's concern with individualisation is also a concern with (a) community (Being-with-others) and (b) work (Being-in-the-world).

In connection with (a), Rickey makes a convincing case for thinking authentic existence must be understood as, in some sense, a communal affair and, *pace* (ii), that that is consistent with this ideal having a religious inspiration. He proposes that to ascribe to Heidegger a religiosity of extreme individualism and asocial inner purity is 'to ascribe to him a conception of religion foreign to his endeavours' (103–4): the antinomian mysticism which Rickey sees in Heidegger is 'communal from the ground up' (116) and, rather than leading to an apolitical withdrawal from the public sphere (as (ii) suggests), would place politics at the heart of his thinking. In connection with (b), Rickey argues that '[i]n *Being and Time* . . . there is a deep ambiguity in the meaningfulness of work and the everyday world' (73 n.3), an ambiguity which Heidegger comes to address in his later concern with technology. According to this novel reading, these later

reflections attempt to understand authentic existence as a this-worldly one in which concern with 'our daily bread' must figure. It is by drawing partly on his discussion of (a) and (b) that Rickey makes a case for thinking that Heidegger's Nazism had a serious philosophical motivation.

There is a lot going on in this book and a short review such as this can only touch on some of this; much of what follows is critical but this is a thought-provoking piece of work with a distinctive approach and something to contribute on a number of important topics.

One issue on which I remain inclined to side with the orthodoxy is (i). One can understand why one might be inclined to think a passage such as the following articulates the ideas of a religious thinker:

In the moment of authenticity, being ecstatically reveals itself as the meaning of the world. To be an authentic self means to be at one with this revelation of being, to be at one with a meaning of existence that is enacted as a specific historical epoch . . . To be an authentic self is to be the site of a revolutionary revelation of being that acts by founding worlds. (70).

But at the same time, much would seem to depend on how such abstract remarks are filled out, on how we understand expressions like 'revelation' and 'being at one with'. Rickey talks of such 'revelations' as 'divine revelation' (7) and as 'flashes of divinity' (6). But why think of them in such terms? They may be unanticipatable and ascribable to no source that can be identified with a particular entity or event within the world; but their lacking any kind of natural cause is not a reason to believe that they have a cause that merits description in religious terms.

My root worry is that Rickey may be operating with a notion of 'the religious' that is so thin that one will be hard put to assess his argument. Early in the book, Rickey refers to a concept of '[r]eligion, understood broadly' 'as the relationship between humans and the divine' (3); but what is 'the divine'? Rickey emphasises that 'Heidegger is interested neither in personal salvation nor in faith' (166), nor 'an eternal order' (70), and one doesn't need to be hugely sophisticated to imagine a 'religious thinker' like that; but when Rickey describes Heidegger's Christianity as 'peculiar in that it retained the form and rejected the substance' (82), one does start to wonder what it would take for Rickey for Heidegger *not* to be a 'religious thinker'.

(One might think that one can deal with this problem by reference to exemplars: so, for example, might Rickey's most detailed description of parallels between Heidegger and a religious thinker, Meister

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Eckhart, demonstrate that Heidegger is fundamentally a religious thinker? Unfortunately, this example is bedevilled by the fact that it attempts to explain one body of work that is very difficult to fathom by claiming that it is in essentially the same business as another body of work that is also very difficult to fathom; what such a claim tells one about the first body of work may be quite limited because of the difficulty of fathoming the second and one finds oneself wondering whether Rickey is revealing parallels on the level of *ideas* or just on that of verbal formulation, turn of phrase.)

At one point, Rickey talks of Heidegger 'adopting ... Christian motif[s] to his own project' (98) but it seems to me that Rickey needs to make stronger claims than that, because the presence of religious *motifs* in Heidegger's mature early work might well be accepted by adherents of (i). A case in point would be his invocation of the idea that '[g]enuine religion ... can experience the whole' (25). This plays an important but, I think, questionable role in Rickey's cases for thinking that, for Heidegger, 'to pursue phenomenology is already to live religiously' (28) and that religious notions inflect profoundly Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle's concept of *phronēsis*.

Rickey is surely right to point to an important religious motivation in Heidegger's notion of phenomenology as a return to 'an authentic primordial layer of life from which theory was cut off' (22); a theological overlooking of religious experience in focussing instead on doctrine surely is one of the most important examples for the young Heidegger of how 'the theoretical attitude' distorts our understanding of ourselves and of the world around us; and phenomenology's particular interest in 'the whole' (26) – on the grounds that '[t]his whole forms the background, so to speak, within which each thing appears in its specific meaning' (29) – also surely parallels a recognizably religious interest in 'the whole'. But equally *philosophy* has always been concerned with 'the whole', with the world as a whole, Being *as such*, thought, language, objecthood, etc. *in general*. One might reply that that just betrays the fact that religious ideas (or perhaps just motifs?) suffuse philosophy in general. But that won't do for Rickey because he wishes to claim that there is something distinctively religious about Heidegger's philosophy in particular.

Rickey's discussion of 'Heidegger's startling transformation of *phronēsis*' (225) provokes a similar worry. Rickey argues that, for Heidegger, *phronēsis* is a 'revelation of being as a whole' (64), 'the instantaneous moment of vision that clears the opening in which beings come to presence, the lightning flash of being which steers the whole' (18); Rickey proposes that we see a religious twist here in this concern with 'the whole'. But this seems odd since Aristotle

himself characterises *phronēsis* precisely as guiding action in the light of an understanding not of one ‘department’ of life but of the good life *as a whole* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5 1140a25–31). Once again, a concern with life ‘as a whole’ does not demonstrate that Heidegger’s thinking is distinctively religious.

I have other worries about the ‘transformed’ notion that Rickey presents. Unlike Aristotle, who ‘believed that *phronēsis* accompanies all action’, Heidegger, Rickey suggests, saw *phronēsis* as ‘a rare occurrence in human life’, ‘the birth of entirely new worlds, with new gods and new ways of grasping the direction of history’ (59). Through Aristotle’s *phronēsis*, we ‘go beyond’, in some sense, what rules have to offer and, in doing so, make a certain kind of unguided leap; being struck by that fact might possibly lead one to adopt something like the notion that Rickey describes and in particular if one’s thinking is influenced by certain Pauline ideas. But what I think Rickey fails to present is enough evidence for thinking that this is indeed what happened to Heidegger and that the above ‘transformed’ notion of *phronēsis* plays a role in, for example, *Being and Time*: in Rickey’s presentation of these supposedly distinctive inflections (58–64), virtually all of the textual evidence comes from 1935’s *An Introduction to Metaphysics* and Heidegger’s 1935–36 and 1942 lectures on Hölderlin, and it is far from clear that all of these passages concern *phronēsis*. I don’t want to question ‘the equation between *phronēsis* and authenticity’ (18 n. 7) or what is also obviously important to Rickey, the notion that that equation makes authenticity a matter of *practical* wisdom, an aspect of our *acting* rather than some kind of mere ‘stance’; and Rickey’s ‘transformed’ *phronēsis* might perhaps be seen as at work in the later Heidegger. But there seems to be good reason to be sceptical about its figuring in *Being and Time*.

As Rickey himself points out (14 n. 3), his picture of Heidegger’s development in the decade running up to *Being and Time* is dependent on interpretations of that same period offered by Kisiel and van Buren, both of whom strike me as a little too ready to read later themes into the earlier work. Moreover, neither of these interpreters is the easiest to interpret and Rickey’s version exacerbates that difficulty by being so very condensed, indeed almost telegraphic at times. The material under discussion is in itself extremely difficult and I found much of what Rickey had to say here under-explained. Thus, a caveat that must be added to my earlier critical remarks is that I found the sections which present the claims that I criticise often very hard to follow.

I will end with a few brief comments on Rickey’s understanding of Heidegger’s Nazi involvement, according to which ‘[h]is political

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activism flowed from his religious motives' (103). Rickey argues that a national, socialist, workers party would meet Heidegger's need for the enacting of a communal, historically- and culturally-specific revelation of being that places work at the heart of authentic existence. He also argues that Heidegger's readiness to embrace the *Führerprinzip* reflects the fact that the kind of antinomian 'community of saints' which he envisaged needs a charismatic leader if it is to be unified, since it 'reject[s] organisation and rule' (223, 12, 7).

Setting aside the above worries about how *religious* such needs are, Rickey's case is an interesting and novel one in which there may be some truth. But one ought not to overestimate the extent to which it undermines the views of those who would separate Heidegger's philosophy from his politics. Were Rickey's account to be correct, one would still need to see Heidegger's political actions as those of a 'philosophical dreamer' who 'constructed an entire imaginary philosophical stage for the historical happening' of Nazism (R. Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. E. Osers (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 234, 235); one needs such a 'stage' in order to explain how Heidegger came to see *Hitler* as that necessary charismatic leader and *that* National Socialist Workers Party as the national, socialist, workers party that would 'overturn the existing experience of being' (193). The very vagueness of what Rickey sees Heidegger as seeking might well account for his willingness to join in the Nazi's 'vague invocation of German national destiny' (251). But that very vagueness also somewhat weakens the case for thinking that there was a powerful philosophical connection between Heidegger's philosophy and Nazi politics.

I should repeat that, despite my worries, there is much of interest in this book, much that I have been unable to discuss here. Rickey offers a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on Heidegger's politics and religiosity.

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The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-being

By Daniel M. Haybron.

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In this substantial and carefully argued book, Daniel Haybron develops an account of happiness – what it is, how it relates to well-being, and why all too many people fail to achieve it. These are pressing