

Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Globalisation: Response to Nicholson and Rockmore

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No one will, I think, disagree with the conclusion that Heidegger was mistaken in his expectations for National Socialism. He quite quickly came to the conclusion that Nazism, like Bolshevism and liberal-capitalism, was another form of the realisation of global technopolitics. Nonetheless, National Socialism was a much more complex phenomenon than commonly allowed for today. Heidegger was justified in holding, at least in 1933–34, when the political situation was quite fluid, that it did have positive possibilities, in the sense of an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist program. The appeal of National Socialism can only be understood in terms of its resistance to the imperialism of both East and West: resistance to the Treaty of Versailles, and resistance to communist terrorism and expansionism. The fact that National Socialism ultimately took an imperialist turn itself does not invalidate the fact that it began as a resistance movement against foreign occupation and exploitation.¹ The perceived *positive possibilities* of early Nazism found support among the proponents of the Conservative Revolution, giving Heidegger some reason to believe that they, rather than the more nihilistic elements of Nazism, could win the day to institute the renovation of the German polity.² Ultimately, these possibilities remained unrealised. In this respect Nazism resembles Marxism, another form of totalitarianism which also devolved, in every country where it gained power, into a complete human-rights disaster of mass murder.

Dr. Rockmore makes the error of identifying National Socialism

¹ National Socialism stressed that Weimar was in all essential aspects an illegitimate client state of Western capitalism. It offered a program of economic and cultural renewal that was attractive to many people who were by no means doctrinaire Nazis. We have to distinguish the appeal of Nazism for the general population from its appeal for the extreme Party membership and parts of the anti-Weimar intelligentsia.

² Bernhard Radloff, *Heidegger and the Question of National Socialism: Disclosure and Gestalt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Chapter 3 deals at length with Heidegger's relation to the ideas of the Conservative Revolution. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as HQNS.

with racism, as if racism were its sole or even most significant source of appeal. If Dr. Rockmore wishes to prove that Heidegger was a supporter of Nazism understood *solely as a racist anti-Semitic movement*, he would have to begin by way of a concrete historical analysis of what National Socialism offered potential voters. Secondly, he would have to show that the Nazi socio-political election platform was compatible with Heidegger's political thinking. But he has done neither, being content to claim that Heidegger was a racist. Even if he were—which I do not accept—it would not necessarily make him a National Socialist. In fact, contrary to the common, popular version of Nazism, Hitler, as evidenced by his speeches, promised social and cultural renewal, and freedom from foreign intervention, not a war against the Jews. As Claudia Koonz, for example, has shown, anti-Semitism was of little consequence in attracting voters between 1928 and 1932, and in his speeches between 1933 and 1939 Hitler emphasised the injustices of Versailles, and the communist threat, not the Jews.³ The accusation of racism, in the sense of ascribing racism to a particular philosopher or philosophical position, is a useful tool in contesting an ideological struggle, but its philosophical value, it seems to me, is very limited. In the discussion of Heidegger and Nazism we have to focus, I think, on the reasons for the appeal of Nazism to a broad spectrum of voters at the time, not on what we, from the perspective of 1945 and beyond, tend to ascribe to Nazism.⁴

The crucial significance of Versailles is never even mentioned by Dr. Rockmore, let alone appreciated in its historical significance. The

³ See Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3, 10–13, 100.

⁴ After the 9/11 attacks on New York City, the United States launched wars on perceived terrorist states halfway around the globe. It is worth remembering that in 1933 Germany was next-door neighbour to one of the most powerful states on earth, the Soviet Union, a state dedicated in principle to terrorism as revolutionary policy. By the time Hitler had come to power, the leadership of this state, first under Lenin, and then under Stalin, had already murdered millions of people. The politically instigated famine in the Ukraine was at its height in 1933. Of all the reasons to support National Socialism in the early 1930s, I suggest that *fear of a communist take-over in Germany* was a far more powerful and more prevalent motivation to vote for the anti-communist Nazis than the racism Dr. Rockmore focusses on. A reading of *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, by Stéphane Courtois, *et al.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) is useful in putting the rise of Nazism into context.

philosophical significance of the war-guilt clause of Versailles—implicating as it does a metaphysics of collective subjectivity and collective guilt—stands in direct relation to the imperialism of metaphysical liberalism. By metaphysical liberalism, I mean the anthropology deriving from Hobbes and Locke, which defines the state in terms of the *socio-technical satisfaction* of human needs. (HQNS, 417–19) This understanding of the human animal claims for itself an ahistorical universality which refuses all limits and which is in principle at war with every historically founded culture and polity. The claim of liberalism to represent and speak for humanity has the effect of rendering illegitimate and outlawing any people and any state that does not ascribe to the presuppositions of liberalism. In his *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt saw this very clearly, and on this point Heidegger, as I show, is in fundamental agreement with him.⁵ The claim to speak in the name of humanity serves the imperial global ambitions of metaphysical liberalism. This claim presents itself in the guise of democracy and purports to represent superior human values.⁶

Heidegger contends that the world wars are events in the history of being. There is nothing mythological or mystifying in this claim. They

⁵ See Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1933), 42, tr. by G. Schwab as *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers's University Press, 1976), 61; and Radloff, *HQNS*, 265. On the anti-liberalism of Heidegger, see *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989), tr. by P. Emad and K. Maly as *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), section 19. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA65. See also Heidegger's *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998), 148–49. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA38. For a helpful discussion of Heidegger's view of liberalism, see Richard Polt, "Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," in *Political Theory*, vol. 25, no. 5 (1997), 655–79.

⁶ The foreign policy of liberalism is often associated with former American President Woodrow Wilson, whose political legacy is still very much alive today. Rejected by many American commentators immediately after World War I, this legacy has been critically evaluated again in recent historical literature. See, for example, Jim Powell, *Wilson's War: How Woodrow Wilson's Great Blunder Led to Hitler, Stalin, and World War II* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005); Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); and Patrick J. Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War* (New York: Crown, 2008).

are events in the total mobilisation of all entities—all human and natural resources—in accordance with what is today. Heidegger understands the being of what is, in the consummation of metaphysics, as the *making-secure and available of entities as functions of the empowerment of power*.⁷ I take this to be a phenomenological thesis and, as such, an explication of the meaning of what is given today. The global struggle to secure sources of energy, the genetic engineering of plants and animals to increase yields, ideological battles in service of globalisation, are just some of the countless ways in which the truth of making-secure defines what beings are: they *are* only insofar as they are made operational in the service of making-secure. In political terms, making-secure in the service of power signifies global imperialism. The continuing struggle against Nazism, a political movement that was defeated on the battlefield more than sixty years ago, is also an integral part of the ideology of globalisation and global resource imperialism. It functions to de-legitimize any form of socialist, populist people's movement, any state that attempts to retain control of its own political destiny, natural resources, and culture.⁸

⁷ A number of Heidegger's works of the late 1930s develop the question of being as power in the consummation of metaphysics. See *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998), 75, 183–85. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA69. *Über den Anfang* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2005), 156. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA70. See Bernhard Radloff, "Self-Overpowering Power and the Refusal of Being," in *Existentialia* XVII (2007), 393–421, for an extended discussion of these questions in the context of globalisation and imperialism.

⁸ The subject of "globalisation" has, of course, produced a vast literature. Some of the key issues (implicitly in the philosophical perspective of Marx and Nietzsche-Deleuze), are laid out in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004). The global is the actualisation of the common as the universal of collective subjectivity. See also Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1997). The fact that a dedicated Marxist such as Badiou should come to claim St. Paul as his hero is not an accident or a personal peculiarity of Badiou, but is grounded in Badiou's metaphysical understanding of being and "event." The universal is founded in and as the self-affirmation of subjectivity. On Heidegger's understanding of the common (*koinon*) as the metaphysics of "communism," see GA69, 39, 208. On the critique of "intellectualism," which is related to the deconstruction of the ahistoricity of the universal, see Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* and *HQNS*, Chapter 5.

In *Mindfulness*, composed between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger enumerates five ways in which metaphysical being in the consummation of Modernity manifests itself. These are as follows: dynamism, totality, the imperial, the rational and the planetary.⁹ Dynamism signifies the social and technological transformation of all entities into functions of a global system; this totality, defined by the drive toward the uniformity and secured availability of stock-on-call, gives beings such *operational* being they have. The imperial is the element of the commanding-overseeing management of resources with a view to the most efficient, and in this sense rational, exploitation of resources. The being of beings, understood in this way, grasps beings as functions of the dynamic totality of the planetary whole as posited by reason. Planetary thinking inaugurates the indifferenciation of entities as actual or potential resources. Heidegger's thinking responds to this indifferenciation to ask how the differentiation of being may be experienced, thought and founded.

Dr. Nicholson raises a question regarding the differentiation of being in relation to the *Gestalt* of beings. He notes that thinking the *withdrawal* of being is key to understanding the differentiation of being in beings. He asks whether being in the post-metaphysical sense (*Seyn*) is not "an unending fleeing from all *Gestalt*, inherently formless and sublime." This question is directly related to the possibility of the passage to another inception of thinking, one which will no longer be governed by technicity. Heidegger holds that the planetary dimension is the operationalisation of the *indifferenciation* of the being of entities—all are understood in terms of their being-made or their potential being-made, their availability as stock-on-call, their uniformity as resource, their disposability, and the lived experience which lives these functions. (GA69, 185–87; GA66, 109–12) In-differenciation is understood as a loss of being—beings are abandoned by being to the indifference of their uniform functionality. Conversely, the *differentiation* of being (*Seyn*) in beings means that beings are saved in the difference of their particular being. The withdrawal of being mentioned above is thought as the saving, sheltering moment of the truth (unconcealment) of entities. In what sense is withdrawal a saving-sheltering? In the sense that it withdraws a being

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997), 18, tr. by P. Emad and T. Kalary as *Mindfulness* (London: Continuum, 2006), 13–14. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GA66.

from the representational transparency of technological thinking, which is the condition of its functionalisation. The withdrawal of being in beings, therefore, is not a fleeing, not the sublimity of what refuses representation to affirm the power of subjectivity; the withdrawal is rather the grant of what saves and shelters from the representational thinking of metaphysics. Withdrawal in this sense, in the sense of unconcealment and the *lethe* of *aletheia*, is distinct from the oblivion of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) that accompanies the history of metaphysics. The differentiated and delimited takes *Gestalt* in the sense of the unfolding of its own temporality. And it is *Gestalt* in these senses of the refusal of objectification and the unfolding of its unique temporality which in the first instance defines the being of the *Gestalt* of a people.

The question of *Volk* and the possibility of a genuine *Volk* community has to be seen within this context of the planetary. First, a brief comment on language. Dr. Nicholson is correct to note the distinction between the terminology and discourses of the period, and Heidegger's philosophical usage of words. For example, one cannot assume that Heidegger uses a word like *Volk* in the same sense as Adolf Hitler merely because the term is the same. The issue is not only, and not fundamentally, a question of recognising the polysemy of words, particularly words of great historical resonance. Beyond this, Heidegger, from a very early period on, held a view of concept formation which is at odds with the kind of equivalence Dr. Rockmore supposes. Assuming that for the National Socialists the word *Volk* does refer to a definite content—it does not for Heidegger. It is the formal indication of a possible way of being. As such, *Volk* only is in the enactment of what is formally indicated. *Volk* does not refer, in Heidegger's usage, to a preconceived conceptual content to which Heidegger as well as Hitler might be making reference.¹⁰

What then, are we to understand by the word *Volk*? The struggle between Nazism, on the one hand, and Soviet Communism and its capitalist allies, on the other, are evidence of the struggle between a global world order based on the homogeneity of all peoples as resources for ex-

¹⁰ On formal indication, see especially Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 164–70; John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 324–42. Heidegger offers a treatment of formal indication (*formale Anzeige*) in his early lectures on St. Paul and Augustine: *Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), 55–65.

exploitation, and the principle of the mutual limitation of nations in the organisation of world affairs. Heidegger's *initial* response to National Socialism was based on his expectation that it could serve as a counter-movement to the politics of the operational organisation of the "masses." He evidently thought that Nazism, given its insistence on a national principle of self-affirmation, could articulate the historicity of a people. In the first instance, historicity is to be understood as the *refusal* of the socio-technical reduction of a people to a human population of working-consuming animals, and as the *affirmation* of the most essential possibilities of a tradition.¹¹ In Heidegger's view, the struggle against this reduction is what made Nazism, for a short time, an anti-imperialist movement in its resistance to the imperialism of both liberal finance capitalism and Soviet Communism. Heidegger's Nazism, if such it was, identified with the left wing of the Nazi Party, which emphasised the *national* against the international, and the *socialist* liberation of peoples from international finance capitalism.¹²

In response to the reduction of human being to a working-consuming animal, a number of Heidegger's texts of 1933–34 are attempts to re-conceptualise labour, that is, work, as a way of being responsive to the differentiation of being in beings. Heidegger's objective is to theorise an *authentic socialism* of the people. This calls for an *ethos of dwelling commensurate with the limits of the earth*. As such, it is opposed to the primacy of the exploitation of entities—of human and of natural "resources"—which define both capitalism and the historical communism of the Soviet Union.¹³ (HQNS, 180–98; GA38, 165) These

¹¹ See Radloff, *HQNS*, Chapter 3, "Heidegger and the Conservative Revolution," for a full discussion of this question.

¹² Hitler's challenge to Western finance capitalism is discussed in Guido Giacomo Preparata's *Conjuring Hitler: How Britain and America Made the Third Reich* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), especially 229–44; and Ellen Hodgson Brown's *The Web of Debt* (Baton Rouge: Third Millennium Press, 2007), 236–40.

¹³ The metaphysics of communism in relation to liberalism are discussed in GA69, 39, 196, 208; see also Radloff, "Self-Overpowering Power and the Refusal of Being," *op. cit.*, 410–13. Elsewhere I argue that the universalism of communist metaphysics, a universalism it shares with liberalism, is founded in the metaphysics of "life": see B. Radloff, "The Life of the Universal: Response to Slavoj Žižek," in *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4 (2007) (online journal).

texts have been described as “Nazi” by Faye and others.¹⁴ For Faye and others of similar persuasion, any German-national third way will qualify as “Nazi.” What is “Nazi” about them? The attempt, which Nazism indeed shared with Heidegger, to find a third way beyond the aporias of international socialism and international finance capitalism in response to the de-nationalisation and exploitation of labour, and the devastation of our natural environment. Have we solved this problem today in the age of accelerated globalisation? Obviously, we have not, and this is the issue Heidegger’s political philosophy raises for us today.

This being said, all three ideologies are affirmations, as Heidegger quickly realised, of different versions of collective subjectivity—be it the collective of the universal class, the humanism of metaphysical liberalism, or the national-ethnic collective of National Socialism.¹⁵ As such, real existing Nazism could not be what Heidegger sought as a counter-movement to the metaphysics of total mobilisation.¹⁶ It was itself an integral part of this metaphysics, despite, or even because of, its resistance to globalisation. The fact that the Nazi leadership *fundamentally misunderstood* the metaphysics of globalisation by casting it in the light of a *Jewish world conspiracy* encompassing Bolshevism and finance capitalism blinded it to the *true provenance* of this metaphysics in the history of being—that is, in the Greek inception of philosophy, and in the marriage, so to speak, of philosophy and Christianity.¹⁷ The affirmation of the national and the *Volk* in opposition to abstract universalism is only a preliminary, although necessary counter-movement in preparing the project of founding a *Volk*. Only with a decisive turn away from subjectivity,

¹⁴ See Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: l'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005).

¹⁵ See B. Radloff, “Machination and the Political in *Mindfulness*,” in *Heidegger Studies* 24 (2008), 145–66, for an extended discussion of Heidegger’s critique of the metaphysics of National Socialism.

¹⁶ The concept of “total mobilisation” derives from Ernst Jünger. See his “*Die totale Mobilmachung*,” in *Blätter und Steine* (Leipzig: Tauschnitz, 1942), 122–52. Heidegger’s *Zu Ernst Jünger* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997) offers an extensive commentary on Jünger’s work, one which reflects his own critical appropriation of the concept of total mobilisation for the history of being.

¹⁷ See GA65, §52, and GA66, 166, on Heidegger’s understanding of Christianity in the history of being; cf. Radloff, *HQNS*, on the truth (*veritas*) of imperialism in its Roman-Christian form, 418–19.

and with the founding of being in *Da-sein*, does *Volk* become a possibility, one arising out of an ethos of openness to being in its uniqueness and groundlessness.

The tendency to read National Socialism monolithically, from the perspective of Nürnberg, as Dr. Rockmore does, has been very deeply ingrained in our thinking by many years of propaganda and our so-called “popular culture.” This is an essential reason why the discussion of “Heidegger’s politics” is *generally so futile*: we presuppose that we already know what Nazism is, and fail to ask the question of its philosophical significance in the unfolding of Modernity.¹⁸ History is a

¹⁸ Evaluation of National Socialist anti-Semitism, for example, and the Jewish policy of the 1930s, is further complicated by the fact of Nazi support for Zionism: throughout the 1930s, the anti-Semitism of the Nazis took the peculiar form of state support for the *Zionist programme of the emigration of German Jews to Palestine*. If this is the case, and it has been extensively documented by three different historians, then the anti-Semitic racism of the Nazis also takes on a different cast: the fundamental motivation of Nazi anti-Semitism, at least initially, is directed against perceived Jewish internationalism, whether in the form of international socialism or international finance capitalism. Only in these terms is Nazi support for a national-ethnic, that is, Zionist, solution to the dilemma of European Jewry understandable. What this means, in turn, is that we have to re-evaluate our understanding of the core concepts of Nazism. In respect to what most concerns us here—Heidegger’s relation to Nazism—this implies the deconstruction of an essentialist view of Nazism, and the realisation, as I have suggested, that the situation which Heidegger confronted in 1933 is more complex than is usually supposed. Of course, this *in no way minimises or excuses* the exclusionary measures which the Nazi regime instituted against German Jews in the civil service and other institutions shortly after they came to power. Unlike the intellectual leaders of the Conservative Revolution—Edgar Jung and Ernst Jünger, for example—many mainstream Nazis tended to *racially profile* Jews as invariably liberal-internationalist or socialist-internationalist. Undoubtedly, this accusation of *dual loyalty* was unjust, and evidently a great tragedy for German Jews. From the Nazi point of view, Zionism was the *exception to the rule of Jewish internationalism* because it was clearly *ethnic, socialist and national* in its political thinking. My point is *not* that Zionism can be associated with Nazism, but that the anti-Semitism of Nazism arose out of its peculiar understanding of internationalism, in effect, out of its concept of what we today call globalisation, and its rejection of it. As I have already noted, in ascribing the origin of internationalism to an all-encompassing Jewish conspiracy, the Nazis totally misconceived the problem. Philosophically, what is at stake is an interrogation of the provenance of planetary thinking in the history of being. On the relation of Zionism to 1930s National Socialism, see Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (Lon-

comparative discipline. It is strange that historians such as Ernst Nolte, and others, who study National Socialism in the context of modern totalitarianism and imperialism, should be faulted for doing what the discipline demands in every other field of study.¹⁹ Yet, the reason for this essentialisation of Nazism, which abstracts it from the context of Modernity and its metaphysical foundations, is not far to seek—it is the expression of an ideological position intent on instrumentalising the events of the past century in the service of the new world order of globalisation. This calls for the discrediting of every national movement which would limit the global flow of capital and seek to preserve its national economy, its culture or even its native *ecology*.²⁰

I will now turn to the three examples Dr. Rockmore uses to support his indictment of Heidegger, and I will try to show in what sense the issues they raise can be philosophically significant.

The first item of the indictment charges that Heidegger was opposed to Professor Hönigswald's appointment to a chair in philosophy on the grounds that he was a Neo-Kantian, liberal internationalist, *and a Jew*. As I have indicated, Heidegger was an opponent of liberal internationalism for essential philosophical reasons.²¹ The letter offers further evidence of this opposition: liberalism, Heidegger writes, dissolves the essence—meaning the historicity of human being—into a “freely floating consciousness in general, and this is diluted to a universally logical world

don: Croom Helm, 1983); Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Untold Story of the Secret Pact between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: Macmillan, 1984); and Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). Also instructive is Mark Bryan Rigg's *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Ernst Nolte, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1989).

²⁰ The drive to control the genetic codes of life is an integral part of global neo-imperialism. See the collection of essays in *Engineering Trouble: Biotechnology and Its Discontents*, (ed.) R. A. Schurman and D. Doyle Takahashi Kelso (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Especially pertinent is the contribution by William Boyd, “Wonderful Potencies? Deep Structure and the Problem of Monopoly in Agricultural Biotechnology,” 24–62.

²¹ On Heidegger's critique of Rickert and Windelband, see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), especially Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

reason.” In Heidegger’s works of the 1930s, “world reason” is phenomenologically explicated as the triumph of the planetary and the imperial. The rejection of Hönigswald is unambiguously tied to the ahistoricity, the rootlessness, and the false veneer of objectivity of the philosophy he represents. One can, of course, question whether Heidegger’s dire diagnosis of Neo-Kantian liberalism is valid. One can interrogate the relation between metaphysical liberalism and the New World Order of globalisation. But this is not what Dr. Rockmore does; he rather seeks to invalidate Heidegger’s critique of universalism, which this letter reflects, by reducing it to Nazism.

The reference to Hönigswald’s being a Jew *introduces a red herring* into the argument, for it does not at all follow from Heidegger’s anti-liberalism that he is anti-Jewish. Nor is there any indication in the letter that Heidegger supposes that being liberal and internationalist necessarily implies being Jewish by religion or ethnicity. From another source, we know that Heidegger also explicitly rejected the notion that the essence of Bolshevism is Jewish. The same source—the *Beiträge*—defines the inner essence of liberalism as the self-certainty of a subjectivity which knows what “man” is, which refuses to question this knowledge, and which determines the needs of the human animal on the basis of this knowledge. (GA65, 53–54) Liberalism is founded, for Heidegger, on a specific metaphysical thesis: the self-certainty of autonomous, ahistorical subjectivity as the essence of mankind. The rejection of this thesis leads him to question liberalism and its universalist claims as well as the claims of communism—an allied anthropology grounded in subjectivity. This makes him suspect for many political thinkers. Is Heidegger a Nazi simply because he opposes the world order of internationalism in both its avatars—the communist international and the capitalist international? If this is Dr. Rockmore’s argument, he should make it more clearly. In fact, the only thing that this letter proves is that Heidegger took his philosophical anti-Neo-Kantianism very seriously. The philosophical question at issue, which Dr. Rockmore does not raise, is the ahistoricity of liberalism and its metaphysical provenance in the history of being.

The second item of the indictment charges that Heidegger had a racist attitude toward black Africans. Dr. Rockmore refers to lectures on language, *Volk* and historicity dating from 1934. Dr. Rockmore claims that “Heidegger states that blacks, who as a group do not think, therefore have no history.” I find no evidence of this in the text. However, I would

agree with Dr. Rockmore's point to the extent of acknowledging that Heidegger's *actual* reference to Africans is unfortunate, because it alludes to common prejudices and is easily misunderstood and easily misappropriated. Nonetheless, it is clear from the text of the lecture that Heidegger is referring to a prejudicial perception when he notes that "one says" that the Africans have no history. (GA38, 81) Furthermore, he explicitly rejects this notion a few pages on when he states, in summarising his own argument, that "a people without history has history," that is, it is defined by historicity as a potential of its very being. (*Ibid.*, 89) This seemingly paradoxical formulation derives from Heidegger's understanding of historicity as a founding event. Historicity is not given as quality of the rational animal, but is a possibility into which a particular humanity can *enter into* by *founding its own openness to being in beings*. Conversely, a people can *pass out of history* by *failing* to take over and transform its possibilities for being as concretely given by its heritage. A people may also *not-yet* have found its own historicity—in the sense of having-found and having founded its way of being-open to being. Not-yet being its potential for historicity, being its historicity, and no-longer-being its historicity are possible ways of being for any and every people. (*Ibid.*, 84–90)

A people *enters into* its historicity by *taking up the defining task of its own future* as mission.²² Previously, it is "without historicity," but this does not mean that it exists in the manner of inanimate nature or animals. Inanimate objects, such as turning propellers, can only be historical in the derivative sense that they belong to the historical world established by the decisions of human beings.²³ Without historicity—in the absence of its own future-as-project—a people will still have a history in the sense of having a past. For example, a community can "have" its past as the object of historiography. But historicity also means something more fundamental than possessing the resources of history as a discipline in making sense of the past. To be without history in this sense, to be the community of an oral tradition, for example, can be a way of being-in-

²² See Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1974), §74, on the primacy of the future in Heidegger's understanding of historicity; this anticipates the *Logik* lectures of 1934, where the futurity of *Volk* is articulated as *Sendung* (mission): see GA38, 126–30.

²³ The relevant distinction in *Sein und Zeit* is between the *Innerzeitigkeit* (within-timeness) of inanimate nature and the historicity of *Dasein*. See §72.

historicity which the scientific objectification of the past is not, and cannot be.²⁴ Historicity means far more than having-a-past: it means *founding a way of being* in all the essential domains of existence—religion, art, thought, science and the political constitution of a *Volk*. In the absence of such founding there is no *Volk*—only a *producing-consuming human population*, a quantum of economic energy more or less functionally integrated into the global order. Globalisation, as founded in the ahistoricity of the “life” of the human animal, is the organisation of our passage into ahistoricity.

The philosophical significance of this passage, therefore, which I have only touched on, pertains directly to the task that Heidegger set for himself in 1933–34: to *prepare the founding of the historicity of the people* by awakening the question of being. For only the mindful awareness of this question can bring about a *change in the ethos of a people* such as could prepare the founding of historicity. By change in ethos Heidegger basically means a turn away from the *mastery and securing of beings* toward the *event of being* which gives beings their own sense, weight and texture. This event is thought as the historicity of the encounter of being and what we call “mankind.” In *Mindfulness*, Heidegger offers a thorough critique of the will to mastery of beings with direct reference to a statement of Adolf Hitler.²⁵ This critique also applies to liberalism and international socialism, and to globalisation generally, as the systematic making-secure of entities in the securing, technical transformation and exchange of “resources.”

In addressing the question of Heidegger’s supposed racism, I am surprised that Dr. Rockmore does not consider the *Logik* lectures of 1934, wherein the philosopher explicitly deconstructs race as a biological concept. As I show in my explication of this text, Heidegger holds that the concept of race (*Rasse*) derives from a metaphysical concept of the life of the human animal. *Dasein* is not compatible with this anthropology, and Heidegger insists that *Volk*, in his own sense, is not identical with racial-biological descent understood as the condition of the unity and distinctiveness of a people. Rather, the “racial” in this sense is deconstructed and supplanted by the distinctive quality of attunement, the

²⁴ On Heidegger’s critique of historicism, see Bambach, note 23, above.

²⁵ See Bernhard Radloff, “Machination and the Political in Heidegger’s *Mindfulness*,” in *Heidegger Studies*, 24 (2008), 146–66.

rhythm of a people's existence, as expressed in its sense of style, art and music, for example. It is this existential and historical rhythm, not a biological construct, that gives a *Volk* its sense of common identity.²⁶

The third item of the indictment charges that Heidegger on his own premises cannot differentiate between the mass murder and extermination of people and agricultural technology. The issue is the relation between human being and being. It is necessary to distinguish metaphysical being (*Seiendheit*) as founded in the first, Greek beginning of philosophy, and another way of thinking being (*Seyn*), which arises, for Heidegger, with the consummation of the first beginning in the essence of technology. The passage Dr. Rockmore cites, in fact, reflects this distinction. The thinking of being in the other beginning is a response to the essence of technology and its truth, which is the truth of the making-secure of beings as operational functions of the world order of the Same.²⁷ It is this order which does not differentiate in essence, which is to say, every being is thought as an operational function of the whole, as opposed to being thought in the ownness of its kind and way of being. Belonging to the Same (*das Selbe*) does not mean being identical; in fact, Heidegger consistently distinguishes the Same from the Identical. To say that the death of humans, and agricultural technology in the form of the chemical manipulation of nature, are the Same, means that in both cases what-is is *seen in terms of its functional value*, that this value is posited in advance, and that only this functional value is allowed to be.

The preparation of the other beginning, to which Heidegger's thought from the mid-1930s is devoted, is nothing other than the preparation of an ethos of thinking and dwelling that will be able to respond to the differentiation of being in beings. In Heidegger's view—and this relates back to his critique of liberalism and Neo-Kantianism—"values" are posited by self-producing and self-affirming subjectivity. As such, they will always reflect a certain perspective of power and, in fact, serve to empower power.²⁸ For this reason Heidegger holds that values are

²⁶ See GA38, 65, and Radloff, *HQNS*, 177–78. Heidegger works with the distinction between *Rasse* (race) and *das Rassige*: the latter can mean flair, style, spiritedness. The common sense is of a consummate completeness of a particular appearance, rhythm. See also Radloff, "The Life of the Universal," *op. cit.*, above, note 15.

²⁷ In Heidegger's works of the 1930s the Same is thought as the planetary order: Radloff, "Self-Overpowering Power and the Refusal of Being," *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁸ On Heidegger's interpretation of "values" in relation to "justice" and the truth of the

powerless to limit power, because *as values* they are empowered by being-as-power. Dr. Rockmore implicitly raises the question of how a measure for thinking and acting can be found, a measure that would be appropriate to the dignity of human beings and to the “nature” of beings in all their diversity. This is indeed Heidegger’s question, precisely *as* the question of being.²⁹

I will now conclude very briefly by indicating how the philosophical theses derived from the three items of Dr. Rockmore’s indictment are related. Heidegger holds that liberalism, founded in the self-production of humanity, and directed toward the socio-technical management of human populations, is fundamentally ahistorical. The differentiation of being, founded by a *Volk* in beings, is understood by Heidegger as the actualisation of historicity through the encounter of a people with all essential realms of existence. *Volk* is conceived as a movement of withdrawal from objectification, from all utopias, or dystopias, of social engineering, in whatever form—communist, liberal-capitalist, or National Socialist. In the language of *Being and Time*, *Volk* is a *thrown* project. In effect, Heidegger understands the project of being-a-*Volk* as a response to the subjectivity of Modernity, hence to the collective subject of modern political thought, be it Marxist, liberal or National Socialist. The Sameness to which Heidegger refers in the third item, which is the Sameness of the metaphysical being of beings, posits everything that is in its uniformity and availability as stock-on-call. According to Heidegger, values are also posited, and serve being-as-power in the dynamic transformation of the planetary and in its momentary stabilisation in the service of power. Human populations become, global humanity as a whole becomes a function of power, and, thus, positing-values can only confirm the being of power. The planetary realm is defined by the self-production of the human animal in the satisfaction of its needs, and in this sense it is defined by what Heidegger understands as the metaphysics of liberalism. Conversely, to found the political in *Volk* means to overcome the concept of the collective self-production of a

planetary order of the consummation of metaphysics, see Radloff, “Machination and the Political in Heidegger’s *Mindfulness*,” *op. cit.*, 161–62.

²⁹ This point is made explicit in “*Brief über den Humanismus*,” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), in terms of the ethos of a dwelling-responding to being (*Seyn*), 349–55.

human population, and to open human community to the otherness of the divine.

I have tried to show that the key philosophical question that arises out of “Heidegger’s politics,” for us today, is the question of the metaphysical provenance and import of the planetary order we call globalisation. In Heidegger’s view, the world wars of the 20th century are chapters in the empowerment of the being of power, which is manifested in all forms of the socio-technical transformation of the planet. National Socialism, Heidegger argues, also has to be seen within the context of the history of being and the truth of technicity as the making-secure of the planetary dimension. A very serious impediment to taking Heidegger seriously in matters of 20th-century history is the thoughtless acceptance of an unexamined, orthodox version of World War II and its origins. As long as this orthodox version of our recent history remains unquestioned, “the Heidegger case,” as it is often called, the case of Heidegger and Nazism, will remain just another footnote to Nürnberg, as Dr. Nicholson has intimated.³⁰ As opposed to an ideological construction of the world wars, what is required, in Heidegger’s terms, is a philosophical interrogation of our time in the light of founding tenets of Modernity. At the same time, empirical history would have to break free of the ideological straitjacket of Nürnberg to question established verities. And in fact, many historians have done this, but this has not always been recognised by philosophers writing on National Socialism.³¹

³⁰ T. Rockmore and J. Margolis, eds., *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

³¹ In addition to historical research already noted, see, for example, Viktor Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?* (New York: Viking, 1990); and Albert L. Weeks, *Stalin’s Other War: Soviet Grand Strategy, 1939–1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), both on Stalin’s plans to conquer Europe. The tendency to focus solely on the personality of Hitler obscures the way in which Hitler and Stalin both are functions of the being of power, and how being in this sense manifests itself in global total mobilisation down to our own day. The conquest of Germany (1914–45) and its integration into the global system of the victors is a chapter in the process of globalisation. In this context, it is instructive to consult two histories of the conquest of Germany, which analyse aspects of the process, integral to planetary imperialism, of overthrow and integration: Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich* (New York: Basic Books, 2007); and Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam* (London: Routledge, 1979). To understand the history of being as the empowerment of power and therefore as the institution of the

The history of being is not a mythological construct that floats somewhere above and beyond our empirical history. From the post-war ideological perspective, the concept of “total mobilisation,” for example, which Heidegger critically appropriates from Ernst Jünger, is often reduced to a commentary on Nazi Germany. Yet, it is far more than that. It is the being of what is today—manifest in genetic engineering, in the technologies of space war, in the control of information and disinformation, in the neo-imperialist struggle to secure the oil and gas reserves of the Middle East and Central Asia. The history of being—which is the history of truth—offers us insight into the meaning of the history we are living through. And, conversely, the empirical work of historians can offer us phenomenological clues to the history of being as manifested in globalisation and in the ideological struggles and world wars of the past century.

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planetary in the senses noted in my text, *also* means to grasp the empirical events of our recent history as concretely as possible, as opposed to resting content with the ideology of a certain perspective of power.