On the History and Future of Heidegger’s Literary Estate, with Newly Published Passages on Nazism and Judaism: A Review of Klaus Held’s Marbach-Bericht

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On the History and Future of Heidegger’s Literary Estate, with Newly Published Passages on Nazism and Judaism:

Klaus Held’s Marbach-Bericht

Ian Alexander Moore


Klaus Held’s concise report on the status of Heidegger’s literary estate performs three valuable services: it recounts the history of Heidegger’s unpublished papers and the formation of his *Collected Works* (*Gesamtausgabe*, GA); it provides color facsimiles and transcriptions of previously unpublished passages by Heidegger on Nazism and Judaism; and it gives information about philosophical material that will eventually appear outside the framework of the planned 102 volumes of the *Collected Works*. I will discuss these aspects of the book in what follows. Below, I also reproduce and translate the most relevant portions of what Held calls the newly discovered “problematic passages” in Heidegger’s *Nachlass*.

In the introduction, Held explains how the volume emerged. In light of the publication of the first three volumes of *Black Notebooks* in
In 2014, Arnulf Heidegger – the philosopher’s grandson and current executor of his literary estate – commissioned a small team of experts to examine the trove of unpublished material by Heidegger at the German Literary Archive in Marbach. The team, which was comprised of Held as leader, Peter Trawny, Michael Ruppert, and Arnulf Heidegger, had two goals: to see whether any of this material was worth publishing, and to determine whether there were any passages that bear on Heidegger’s relation to Judaism and National Socialism. Although Held is the author of the report as a whole, many of its formulations come from Trawny and Arnulf Heidegger; Trawny is also largely responsible for the commentary on the first and fourth of the “problematic passages.”

In chapter one, “Accessibility of the Literary Estate,” Held discusses how Heidegger’s papers ended up in the Marbach archive and how, after much hesitation, Heidegger eventually decided in favor of a collected edition of his works. In accordance with Heidegger’s wishes, access to all manuscripts, with few exceptions, is denied to researchers until the final versions of these manuscripts are published. For example, scholars will be able to consult the manuscript and any preparatory materials for the final “being-historical treatise,” Die Stege des Anfangs, only once it has been edited and published within the framework of the Collected Works (in this case as GA 72). While this may seem moot, since an edited, legible text will be available, the guiding editorial principle of Heidegger’s Collected Works has been to produce an “Ausgabe letzter Hand” (a non-critical edition based on Heidegger’s wishes and the final state of his texts), which means that supplementary material, crossed-out passages, and, for the most part, earlier versions of his texts are not included in the GA volumes. There is much to be learned from a study of these manuscripts. For instance, one of the most exciting discoveries I made while conducting research in the Marbach archive was that Heidegger had used the backsides of dozens of sheets of his supposedly destroyed lecture course from Winter Semester 1915–16 for later courses and notes, including for Division III of Being and Time.

According to Held, Heidegger, for his part, wanted the relevant manuscripts to become available after publication “so that the work of
the editors could be verified” (12). Such analysis has been fruitful; however, since one still needs permission from the Heidegger Estate to cite from the Nachlass, the process of making findings available has proved arduous and frustrating for some scholars. Translators, moreover, have not been allowed to deviate from the published German texts, even when they discovered transcription errors. Although, over the past few years, the publisher of the Collected Works, Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, has been posting errata and alternate transcriptions on its website, as of 2019, the situation remains the same for translators.

What to do with the manuscripts not planned for the Collected Works, or the 11,000 pages of notes Heidegger left behind? Held relates that the German Literary Archive is willing to digitalize the latter material, although, as of yet, no decision has been reached as to how or when this would take place (see also 71–72).

In chapter two, “Organization of the Literary Estate,” Held explains how Heidegger’s manuscripts and Collected Works came to be organized and divided. He does not, incidentally, repeat the notorious claim that the Black Notebooks were to be published as the “culmination” of the Collected Works. He instead cites Heidegger’s own description of the books as “workshop notes” (“Werkstattaufzeichnungen,” 19).

Chapter three, “Planning for the Supplementary Volumes,” outlines the difficulties with determining which manuscripts merit publication. On the one hand, editors should try to meet Heidegger’s expectation that only the texts he had selected and arranged should be made public. Furthermore, Heidegger had expressed orally that texts requiring extensive editorial work should be withheld. In other words, editors should only have to transcribe a manuscript, correct slips of the pen, write out abbreviations, and occasionally provide a source. On the other hand, there are valuable running texts that do not meet these criteria, and Heidegger himself had organized the above-mentioned 11,000 pages of notes into thematic bundles. Seeing that he had destroyed countless others, shouldn’t we consider the extant notes to be a sort of “last-hand” selection? Held seems to think so, but with the proviso that they must
“relate to one of the identifiable thematic fields in the literary estate” in order to be considered for publication (23).

The team decided that only a relatively small number of manuscripts met these various requirements. These manuscripts include further dialogues, including one with a character named “Ä.,” perhaps “Der Ältere” or “The Elder” of “The Evening Dialogue” or “The Occidental Dialogue” (see GA 77: 205; GA 75: 59);6 as well as texts on space, pain, and attunement.7 The manuscripts will be published in two or three supplementary volumes to the Collected Works.

In chapter four, “A New Inspection of the Literary Estate,” we learn about the team’s process of examining Heidegger’s unpublished papers for problematic passages on National Socialism or Judaism. Though the team did not investigate every surviving page in Heidegger’s Nachlass and, partially due to rights restrictions, ignored the unpublished correspondence altogether, they inspected an enormous amount of manuscript material, as well as transcripts of Heidegger’s courses in the 1930s and the protocols for Heidegger’s reading group on Hegel’s Phenomenology in Winter Semester 1934–35. Chapter five, “Problematic Passages,” reproduces and comments on the five passages they found.

1. The first problematic passage comes from a note Heidegger wrote in conjunction with GA 69, The History of Beyng (1938–40). In the note Heidegger jotted down three terms:

\[
\text{Destruction} \quad | \quad \text{Elimination} \quad \text{Extermination} \quad | \\
\text{Zerstörung} \quad | \quad \text{Beseitigung} \quad \text{Ausrottung} \quad | \quad (28)
\]

The term Ausrottung (“extermination,” “extirpation”) is especially suspicious, as Nazis and other anti-Semites have frequently used it to refer to the extermination of the Jews. One can gain a sense for the prevalence of the term by noting the subtitle of the German version of Gerald Reitlinger’s famous study: Die Endlösung: Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas, 1939–45.8 Held traces Heidegger’s use of the term elsewhere throughout his corpus and finds only one passage in which it has the sense of exterminating a people (GA 97: 156–57).
Since, however, Heidegger is referring to the German people there, Held concludes that “there is no evidence to associate the three concepts with the annihilation of the Jews” (29).

Yet one might wonder whether this reasoning suffices to exculpate Heidegger. Hitler, after all, also spoke of the Ausrottung of the Germans in Mein Kampf (a book Heidegger had read and recommended to his brother), but, there, Hitler explicitly identified Jewish Bolshevism as the perpetrator. To cite just one passage:

The Bolshevization of Germany, i.e., the extermination [Ausrottung] of the national, völkish German intelligence and the squeezing out of the German workforce under the yoke of Jewish world finance that is facilitated by it, is thought of as but a prelude to the further spread of this Jewish tendency toward world conquest.¹⁰

Even if Heidegger, for his part, does not make the connection explicit, one should at least continue to be wary of the anti-Semitic connotations of the term Ausrottung.

2. The second passage appears in one of the manuscripts bearing the title “Die Stege des Anfangs” (“The Footbridges of the Inception”). I here translate and cite only the final portion of it (the bracketed passage at the end is Heidegger’s):

In the end, like Spengler, for example, one views all of history, on the basis of Nietzsche’s metaphysics, as culture, and culture as the expression and exuding of a “cultural soul” that is present at hand — in morphological terms; invoking Goethe, history is taken to be a single object of a gigantic botanics — this botanical-zoological conception of history and of humankind [Menschentümer] has its metaphysical basis in the Christian interpretation of the world, and the latter stems from the Jewish doctrine of creation. Every biological theory of history and every doctrine of race is, in its principle, a Jewish “mindset” [“Gedankengut”]./[not delivered

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– important for the insight into the basic relation between being – beings – saga and humankind]
down to “winning” [“Siegen”] here – and cannot be defeated when it is the people of poets and thinkers, which it will remain in its essence so long as it does not fall victim to the fearsome, because ever threatening straying from its essence, and thus to a misrecognition of its essence.

Der erste Anfang der Wesensgeschichte des Abendlandes steht unter dem Titel “Sein und Wort.” […] Die Abhandlung Sein und Zeit ist nur der Hinweis auf das Ereignis, daß das Sein selbst eine anfänglichere Erfahrung dem abendländischen Menschentum zuschickt. Dieser ursprünglichere Anfang kann sich nur so wie der erste Anfang in einem abendländisch geschichtlichen Volk der Dichter und Denker ereignen. […] Daher gilt es zu wissen, daß dieses geschichtliche Volk, wenn es überhaupt hier auf ein “Siegen” kommt, schon gesiegt hat und unbesiegbar ist, wenn es das Volk der Dichter und Denker ist, das es in seinem Wesen bleibt, solange es nicht der furchtbaren, weil immer drohenden Abirrung von seinem Wesen und so einer Verkennung seines Wesens zum Opfer fällt.

(HA 54: 113–14/76–77, tm)

Held does not comment on the significance of the replacement, though he does tie the problematic passage to a similar conflation of Judaism with racial ideology in GA 96: 56/44. Perhaps Heidegger knew it would have been impolitic to criticize race theory, let alone to call it Jewish, of all things, in those years of the Reich.

3. The next passage comes from a bundle of notes on “Verwahrlosung” (“neglect,” “dilapidation,” or, literally, “becoming true-less”) and “Vergessenheit” (“oblivion”). Although it bears no date, Heidegger seems to have written it shortly before or after the end of the Second World War. Held reproduces two of the notes. The first, which I will cite below, laments the deployment of “concentration-camp propaganda” as
a means to exterminate the Germans (*Ausrottung* again). Although, to my knowledge, Heidegger does not use this phrase elsewhere, the note is similar to comments he makes in the *Black Notebooks*. In the second note, Heidegger bitterly expresses his disappointment with the Germans.

“Politics” // If, after the complete defeat of Germany, which has been compelled with help from Russia, we wish to exploit Germany up to the last bit and to eliminate it as a competitor, then, for the implementation of annihilation, which is in its beginning stages after the “end of the war,” a *pretense* “of punishment” is needed. Since, indeed, one previously just shouted to free the people from the yoke of Nazism. Nothing is more welcome than concentration-camp propaganda—which can rest on “facts,” but offers great opportunities to turn away from everything else and to drive the Germans into confessions of sins and such—under this protection “one” implements one’s plans: “moral outrage” as a “weapon.” Then there are “Germans” who believe and want to make believe that the victors, oozing with morality and propriety, are (morally) compelled, solely on account of Germany’s disgraceful deeds regarding the concentration camps, to commit the transgression of extermination [*Ausrottung*] that they are now pursuing—/That is all just the preparation of the field for Russia’s deployment.

“Politik” // Wenn wir nach der mit Hilfe Rußland erzwungenen vollständigen Niederlage Deutschlands dieses bis zum letzten Rest ausbeuten und als Konkurrenten beseitigen wollen, bedarf es für die nach “Kriegsende” einsetzende Durchführung der Vernichtung eines Vorwandes “der Bestrafung.” Da man ja vorher nur darum geschrien hat, das Volk vom Nazijoch zu befreien. Nichts willkommener als die

4. The fourth passage comes from Karl Rahner’s protocol of a session from Heidegger’s Winter Semester 1934–35 study group on Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit. Held reproduces the entire protocol on 47–62. What he finds problematic is Heidegger’s claim that Judaism marks the “first concrete form of the unhappy consciousness” in Hegel (45, 55). Held claims: “the narrow linkage of “Judaism” and “unhappy consciousness” can be found in no established Hegel-researcher; its provenance is unknown” (45–46). Now, it is true that, unlike in Hegel’s earlier text “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate,” Judaism does not appear to play a prominent role in the Phenomenology. Hegel, in fact, does not even mention the religion in his discussion of the unhappy consciousness, which seems primarily to characterize medieval Christianity. However, it is false to say that no commentator of rank identifies Judaism as an important source in the development of the unhappy consciousness. Take the following three examples. Jean Wahl, who in 1929 wrote one of the most important and influential studies on the phenomenon, Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel, writes:

The pages dealing with the unhappy consciousness… contain a description of the doubling of consciousness and of its striving toward unity, such as one sees in
religion. Christianity, to which Hegel makes constant but veiled allusions, will have been prepared...by Scepticism as consciousness of human duality, and also...by Judaism as the contradictory consciousness both of the absolute duality of man and God and of their unmediated unity.12

In his comprehensive study of Hegel, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor maintains that “Judaism is the original religion of the unhappy consciousness. [...] We might say that the whole negative side of [Hegel’s] judgement on the religion of unhappy consciousness is discharged onto Judaism.”13 Finally, in Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews, Israeli philosopher Yirmiyahu Yovel, who himself draws on Jean Hyppolite and Otto Pöggeler, explains:

On the level of metaphor, assuming a common denominator for Judaism and the unhappy consciousness, Judaism is... seen as the “birth pangs of the Spirit” (and Christianity). Judaism is the pain and sorrow from which the Messiah, Christ, was born and from which Spirit emerges as a self-conscious subject. So Judaism is, after all, assigned a major role in the Phenomenology: ...Judaism is not one special form among others (on the “periphery”) but is the “center” which permeates all the rest.14

Thus, as a reading of Hegel – and it is not clear Heidegger is aiming for much more than a reading in this particular protocol – I don’t find Heidegger’s linkage especially problematic, certainly not to such an extent as to warrant the inclusion of Rahner’s entire transcript, which was actually already available in print elsewhere (Held seems to have been unaware of this).15 Readers may judge for themselves by consulting the following excerpt from the protocol:

In spite of all the differences, Stoicism and Skepticism are pure, abstract thinking, to which the world is but the
negative. . . . As opposed to this, in Judaism the other is something positive, because it is indeed the shape of the unchangeable. But from the already depicted way in which it grasps the shape of the unchangeable and its own relation to God, it turned out that it could not come to an actual reconciliation. And thus the Jewish religion, despite its superiority to Stoicism and Skepticism, is precisely the first concrete form of the unhappy consciousness. . . .

Bei allen Unterschieden sind Stoizismus und Skeptizismus reines, abstraktes Denken, dem die Welt nur das Negative ist. . . . Im Gegensatz dazu ist im Judentum das Andere ein Positives, weil es ja die Gestalt des Unwandelbaren ist. Aber aus der schon geschilderten Art, wie es die Gestalt des Unwandelbaren und sein eigenes Verhältnis zu Gott auffasst, ergab sich, dass es zu einer wirklichen Versöhnung nicht kommen konnte. Und so ist die jüdische Religion trotz ihrer Ueberlegenheit über Stoizismus und Skeptizismus gerade die erste konkrete Form des unglücklichen Bewusstseins. . . . (55)

Before moving on to the fifth passage, I would like to mention that, in a footnote, Held writes that he could not locate the source for the following quote from Rahner’s transcript: “Und so bleibt der Gegensatz in der Einheit selbst” (54 and note 19). This is actually a loose citation of Hegel’s Phenomenology: “und der Gegensatz bleibt in dieser Einheit selbst,” “and the opposition remains in this unity itself.”

5. When paging through the facsimiles, I was struck by what appears to be a swastika connecting the terms Kehr d. Austrags (“turn of the carrying-out”) with Riß (“rift”), and Tod (“death”) with Heil d. Grimms (“healing of wrath”). In the center uniting both sets is an “E,” presumably for Ereignis (“event”).
The entire facsimile contains sketches numbered I–IV, all of which seem to be attempts to work out the interplay of the fourfold. The note is connected to Heidegger’s incomplete project from the late 1940s to early 1950s titled *Vier Hefte* (*Four Notebooks*), which he himself referred to as “the second part of *Being and Time*” (GA 98: 61; see also GA 99 as a whole).

Now, Heidegger could have joined the terms differently, with an “x,” for example. Moreover, Held notes that, elsewhere, Heidegger does connect the Nazi revolution with *Ereignis* (GA 95: 408/518). Yet why the curves, and what to make of the fact that, “in the text of these pages, there is not the slightest trace of a concrete reference to National Socialism” (68)? These latter difficulties lead Held to conclude: “It is not plausible to assume that Heidegger composed his philosophical
considerations on these pages, which ultimately all circle around the “event,” in order to camouflage a creed of National Socialism hidden in the drawing” (68). As I see it, whatever Heidegger may have intended, his figure is, at best, unnecessary and insensitive.

The final chapter (“Future of the Literary Estate”) addresses the question, frequently posed after the publication of the Black Notebooks, as to whether there will be a critical edition of Heidegger’s works any time soon. The answer is: not until 2046, at the earliest, when the copyright has expired. Heidegger had clearly stated his opposition to such an edition, and Arnulf Heidegger is not willing to go against his grandfather’s intentions. Nevertheless, Held concludes his report with the claim that, once the Collected Works and supplementary volumes have been published, “everyone who is interested will be able to form a comprehensive picture of the entire thought-nexus of Heideggerian thinking” (72). It would, I believe, be worthwhile to think about whether this is possible, and, even if it is, whether a comprehensive picture is enough.

A few questions, then, in conclusion: If it is important to have all of Heidegger’s passages on Judaism available, why not all of his passages on Christianity or on Islam (provided there are any in the Nachlass)? In his notes on pain, which, fortunately, the team decided should be published as a whole, Heidegger goes so far as to claim that pain is being itself.18 This suggests that scholars need at least to consider the claim if they are to have a comprehensive picture of Heidegger’s thoughts on being. Might there be other such terms in Heidegger’s unpublished papers, terms which do not, at first blush, “relate to one of the identifiable thematic fields in the literary estate” (23)? What, moreover, of Heidegger’s reading habits? Leaving aside his own intentions for a moment, why are his marginalia in his personal copies of Jünger (available in Ga 90) more worthy of publication than his extensive annotations in his copies of Nietzsche, the core of whose thought, we should remember, Heidegger believed one could find only in the unpublished writings? If, finally, Heidegger really is a thinker of “ways, not works,” then shouldn’t we be able to follow all his paths, rather than treating some as deserving of a book, and the others as deserving of a basement?

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However people end up answering these questions, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Klaus Held and his team of researchers for teaching us about the history of Heidegger’s papers and making new passages available from the Nachlass.19

NOTES
1 There are two sets of exceptions: (1) documents by Heidegger that the German Literary Archive acquired from non-family members; the public can examine these documents, just not reproduce or cite from them without permission from the Heidegger Estate; (2) instances in which the literary executor grants special permission. I was surprised to learn that, in the four decades following Heidegger’s death, only about eighty requests for such permission were made; the executor granted approximately half of them.
3 While this has not been my experience, see Julia Ireland’s and Theodore Kisiel’s accounts of their trials with the world of Heidegger philology: Ireland, “Heidegger et la lisibilité de “N. Soz,””

The list of corrections can be found here (accessed October 15, 2020): https://www.klostermann.de/Buecher/Seite-/-Kategorie/Corrigenda. In 2019, for my co-translation of GA 49, I received a document (signed 2009) that contains the following directive in English: “Concerning the Complete Works Edition, Martin Heidegger clearly stated that the translators shall adhere exactly to the German edition of the Complete Works, and that nothing must be added or removed from this original text. […] All works are subject to the basic principle that translations may not be published in any other manner than the German originals.”

The latter description comes from 1957 and can be found, with more details, in Arnulf Heidegger, “Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Gesamtausgabe von Martin Heidegger,” in *Seefahrten des Denkens: Dietmar Koch zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Alina Noveanu, Julia Pfefferkorn, and Antonio Spinelli (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017), 148. I might add that Heidegger at one point advised Walter Biemel, one of the early scholars involved in the formation and edition of Heidegger’s *Collected Works*, to consult the Black Notebooks when the dates of other archival material proved difficult to determine: Walter Biemel, “Erinnerungen an Heidegger,” *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2, no. 1 (1977): 18. Heidegger must have later changed his mind, though, for when the notebooks were shipped to the archives, Heidegger insisted, according to Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, that they be kept “doubly secret, as it were” (GA 94: 531).

In an unpublished portion of a letter to his brother from June 28, 1945 (available in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach under call number HS.2014.0069.00012), Heidegger relates that he is contemplating ten interrelated dialogues, all of which will tie back to the first (“Ἀγχιβασίη,” in GA 77). Perhaps at least some of these are the unpublished dialogues that the team discovered.


In *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus*, 21–22 (letter from December 18, 1931).


In Richard Polt’s summary: Heidegger “does refer to Nazism as a ‘reign of terror’ (GA 97: 84) under Hitler’s ‘criminal madness’ (GA 97: 444). But at the same time, he rejects the victors’ claims to morality and justice, which he sees as mere masks for the spirit of revenge (GA 97: 50, 64, 117, 134–35). In a typical passage, he refers almost with contempt to ‘the broadly visible devastation and the horrors that can be graphically portrayed on posters,’ which showed photographs of concentration camps (GA 97: 84–85); these crude, ontic facts pale in comparison to the ‘self-annihilation that now threatens Dasein in the form of a betrayal of thinking’ (GA 97: 85; cf. GA 97: 59, 63, 99–100).” Polt, *Time and Trauma*: 237


16 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Werke* 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 166.

17 In the transcription of the facsimile (64), the last word of the fourth sketch is cut off. It should be “Erde.” For another curious figure, which Emmanuel Faye has, implausibly in my view, read as a double swastika, see GA 59: 245/223; Faye, *The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 109–10.


19 My thanks to Will McNeill, Chris Merwin, Raoni Paduá, Richard Polt, Charles Bambach, and Julia Ireland for their comments on the review.