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Aftermath

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Chapter 9

Aftermath

Babette Babich

The question after any disaster is the question of *what remains* and that, to the extent that there is still something that remains, is the question of life. It is life that is the question after Auschwitz—how go on, how write poetry, how philosophize? What is called thinking after Heidegger? Are we still inclined to thinking, after Heidegger? And what of logic? What of history? And what of science? In addition, we may ask after ethical implications, including questions bearing on anti-Semitism, but also issues of misogyny, as well as Heidegger's critical questions concerning technology and concerning animal life and death.

PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE WAKE OF HEIDEGGER

We modern, postmodern, ideally even *transhuman* human beings want to go further. Not only with Heidegger but generally. And we want to overcome, if not exactly ourselves (as Nietzsche's Zarathustra had recommended), at least those restrictions we find constraining, traditions that seem obscure or outdated. As an aid to getting all of this behind us, we academics find ourselves seeking to define a center that will not hold: writing handbooks and encyclopedias as if their entries alone could make their contents certainties. We are especially minded to do this in these days of truths contested, "alt-facts," "post-truth." Certainty seems essential, yet where shall we find it? And what to do about Heidegger? Indeed, what to do after Heidegger?—a question to be asked given all the things we have learned of his person. Nor can we but imagine that new publications will bring ever more detail, ever more dirt, to light.

But even apart from the moraline cottage industry whose self-appointed role it is and has been to denounce Heidegger, there is another problem. There is the analytic-continental divide which we are anxious to dispense with: analytic philosophers do not like to be called analytic philosophers and viciously resist the idea that there might be any kind of divide. Things are compounded in various departments of philosophy by the triumph of analytic philosophy, pushing out philosophers who had been named continental, dominating appointments made, and changing the curriculum in the process just to secure the change.¹ Thus these days we no longer teach traditional texts, having dusted them from the philosophical canon as all so very much “history of philosophy,” “old philosophy” by contrast with new. Thus analytic philosophy maintains its death grip on the field.

After denying the divide, we are encouraged to do “good work,” as opposed to the “bad work” we might otherwise do. (What is “good work”? What does it look like? Who decides?) Those of us interested in thinkers like Heidegger or Nietzsche or Empedocles morph into so many historians of philosophy, as the analytic philosophers describe scholars with such interests. But are we historians? Did we study history? Or is specializing in some figure from an era not the contemporary sufficient to make us historians?

What is certain is that the publishing world has never seen so many introductions, all written as if leagues of new philosophers stood in need of these. In addition to encyclopedias and handbooks, one can find a range of “companion” type volumes. One can almost imagine a volume on “the compleat” phenomenologist, perhaps as part of a matching set, with another on hermeneutics, encased in a steampunk cassette, just to lock in all the bells and whistles. And there are such volumes (less the slipcase), together with histories of analytic philosophy and classifications of philosophical kinds—one analytic historian of philosophy counts six of these.²

PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOLOGY

Assemblages of this kind, as Borges noted, as Foucault notes in another spirit, as Nietzsche also writes for his own part, are signs of decay. The point is also one Nietzsche spent some time reflecting upon: for what, for *whom* do we collate such handbooks? Nietzsche might have been an even more central part of this culture of decay than he already is. For Nietzsche was slated to prepare, with Hermann Diels, what would become *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.³ And had he done so, as he factually did not, we scholars might be invoking not DK—Diels-Kranz—when we cite the pre-Socratic fragments

but ND—Nietzsche-Diels. Diels, some four years Nietzsche's junior, and privileging Aristotle and the doxographic tradition (where Nietzsche, by contrast, specialized in Diogenes Laertius), would not publish *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und Deutsch* until 1903. The resultant standard work in classical or ancient philology and ancient philosophy makes modern scholarship possible, distinguishing it from the nineteenth-century disciplines of philology and philosophy. Indeed: Diels's edition meant that, as of the first years of the twentieth century, scholars could read the ancient Greeks without being able to read ancient Greek.

Heidegger, who invokes Anaximander's fragment in 1946, cites it following not Diogenes Laertius but Simplicius, but he proceeds to cite Nietzsche's rendering from his *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Here Heidegger also refers to Nietzsche's Basel lecture courses, on the *Preplatonic Philosophers*. And:

In the same year, 1903, that Nietzsche's essay on the Preplatonic philosophers first became known, Hermann Diels' *Fragments of the Presocratics* appeared. It contained texts critically selected according to the methods of modern classical philology, along with a translation. (EGT 13)

Adding that the work is dedicated to Wilhelm Dilthey, Heidegger then quotes Diels's translation. Some seventy years on, Heidegger seems to have had a point: Anaximander's terms are difficult to translate to everyone's satisfaction.

On the matter of translation, Heidegger's 1942 lecture course on Hölderlin's "Ister" reflected on the meaning of *deinon* (GA 53: 74/61). Here we read (in translation) an explicit reflection on translation as such, just because Heidegger's translation, following on Hölderlin's own rendering of Sophocles, had been criticized: Was it accurate? Heidegger reflects on the inevitable conventionality and thus the very circularity of reproof, both in his own respect and with regard to the poet:

who decides and how does one decide, concerning the correctness of a "translation"? We "get" our knowledge from a dictionary or "wordbook" [*Wörterbuch*]. Yet we too readily forget that the information in a dictionary must be based upon a preceding interpretation of linguistic contents from which particular words and word usages are taken. In most cases a dictionary provides the correct information about the meaning of a word, yet this correctness does not guarantee us any insights into the truth of what the word means and can mean given that we are talking about the essential realm named in the word. (GA 53: 74–75/61–62)

Heidegger's own reading/rendering of *alētheia* had similarly been called into question. But, as Heidegger goes on to say, the precision of *le mot juste*,

the ideal of an accurate lexical definition, a one-to-one correspondence, word to word, as it were, drawn from a given “wordbook,” attests to what Nietzsche for his own part would name a “lack of philology.” For Heidegger:

every translation must necessarily accomplish the transition from the spirit of one language into that of another. There is no such thing as translation if we mean that a word from one language could or even should be made to substitute as the equivalent of a word from another language. (GA 53: 75/62)

There have been many reflections on the challenge this poses for us, even as we continue to stipulate Heidegger’s translations as idiosyncratic (at best) and perhaps misleading (at worst).

Nietzsche’s philological reflection on philology goes beyond the question of veridicality to consider just who we might be thinking of when it comes to the *readers* of our compendia, our handbooks, our critical editions—including, as just this is a contested matter today, a *critical* edition of Heidegger. Many scholars find employment in the production of such editorial ventures—think only of the production of Heidegger’s own *Gesamtausgabe*, or the varied commentaries produced, again and again, on Nietzsche’s own texts, or think of Kant or Hegel or Hölderlin and so on. Here it is useful to recall Nietzsche’s meditation on his own discipline in *The Gay Science* (§109):

A remark for philologists. That some books are so valuable and so royal that whole generations are well employed in their labors to produce these books in a state that is pure and intelligible—philology exists in order to fortify this faith again and again. It presupposes that there is no lack of those rare human beings (even if one does not see them) who really know how to use such valuable books—presumably those who write or could write, books of the same type.⁴

There is a lot to unpack here, and Nietzsche offers as much challenge as clue to the “few and rare,” as Heidegger describes those for whom *he* writes, borrowing this designation from Nietzsche. Nietzsche, a little less loftily in this locus, characterizes such “rare human beings” as effectively *invisible* readers (“even if one does not see them”), “who always ‘will come’ but are never there.”⁵

Who are the readers for our current reflections after Heidegger?

We know at least this: the revelations of Heidegger’s Nazism, Heidegger’s anti-Semitism,⁶ tell us unpleasant truths about a man whose work we might otherwise admire, once we are done truth-checking his translations and his reflections on ancient words for truth. Indeed, Heidegger has always been “a bit ‘post truth,’”⁷ and we are gaining, thanks to the current US political regime under Trump, vastly more insight than we had perhaps wished to gain into the fluidity of truth and metaphor. And yet—and I remark on current

politics for this reason—it turns out that one can do terrible things, from swindling—as this is the essence of the “art” of the (real estate) deal—and calumniating others, including misogynistic attacks (quite patently serial ones, as most misogynists are systematically repetitive about it), and still be elected to office. We do not mind misogyny in politics—heck, we practice it in philosophy, we denounce it and talk about it, and go on practicing it. Ditto racism. Ditto anti-Semitism. But for me it matters that we are prepared to tolerate Heidegger’s misogyny (he gets a free pass: think of Arendt, not that we actually do) but not his anti-Semitism.

And when we are done, given that Aristotle was a massive misogynist—Aristotle wrote the book, as it were—we may come to understand why Heidegger thought that we could say of Nietzsche, another massive misogynist, as it was thought appropriate to say of Aristotle, that he was born, he worked, he died (GA 18: 5/4). Still: the “new” Nietzsche introduced for Anglophone readers in the 1970s, making them “continental” in the process, was ushered in under a specifically Heideggerian flag, because without Heidegger, no French Nietzsche.⁸ Still we have learned to do philosophy hermeneutically, hermeneutico-phenomenologically.

And Heidegger is hoist on his own petard.

To quote the title of Thomas Sheehan’s 1981 book collection, *Heidegger: The Man and The Thinker*, Heidegger is henceforth not to be read apart from his Nazism, his anti-Semitism. But that said, how is one to read *Being and Time*? Are we to read it as a Nazi volume, *unterwegs*, *avant la lettre*? Oh, yes: Richard Wolin and Emmanuel Faye tell us, Tom Rockmore tells us, and another generation likewise. But are those readings useful? Surely. It is another question to ask whether those readings translate the work of 1927 into our times. Do they, to use Heidegger’s query with respect to translation, “accomplish the transition from the spirit of one language into that of another?” I have argued that to do so would require a *Heidegger philology* we have yet to develop. Hence, I am not sure that knowing Heidegger’s misogyny, however smarmily egregious it happened to have been, helps. So: should we just bracket it? Heidegger, like Aristotle, lived, worked, died, “and there’s an end on’t”? Surely it matters that Heidegger, anti-Semitic in a world-historical sense and convinced Nazi devotee (*avant la lettre* to be sure), wrote *Being and Time*. Here the question might be, did he also happen to write *Being and Time*, or was being a world-historical anti-Semite/Nazi-devotee-to-be/inveterate misogynist or any part of the preceding a necessary or even contributing condition? Most scholars will take the lesser charge, so Heidegger gets a plea bargain. We add this to our thinking about *Being and Time* as about his other works. And many of us, troubled as we should be, wonder if we might save ourselves some trouble (and some reading) by fixing on the later Heidegger (or as the move is a similar one, the early Heidegger). It goes without saying

that this is a surface remedy at best; convicted Nazis remain so, and so too anti-Semites, and so too ladies'-man-style misogynists.

The “decadence,” to use Nietzsche’s language and to which decadence I began by referring—pointing to our obsession with companion volumes, dictionaries, encyclopedias, introductions—comes with a death certificate issued by the famous, public-intellectual-type scientist Stephen Hawking, who some years ago made the pronouncement: “philosophy is dead.”⁹ Hawking’s declaration was tailor-made for the trans-generation, the humanity 2.0 scholars, the transhumanists, surfing the cutting edge. And yet, as with Nietzsche’s reflections on decadence, Hawking’s certification of philosophy’s death is not new, and an appeal to the crowd, the popular voice that is the voice of the public intellectual, has been with us since antiquity. How else was Socrates able to corrupt the youth in his old age? Or why would acolytes flock to sit at the feet of various Stoics, or Plotinus have his own cult following? Make no mistake: we academics, we scholars, are keen on recognition. Hegel made it the cornerstone of his dialectic of consciousness, Kojève enshrined it for all of Paris: the locked key to Lacan’s master’s discourse. And we want to be up on the latest thing, which latest thing, we are convinced, simply must be better than anything past. And that is understandable, as scholars tend to have a reputation for being fuddy-duddy types, nose-in-a-book types. Writing on the “new” Heidegger, post the devastating publication of the *Black Notebooks* and the pronouncement of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism to match his well-known Nazism, we write “after” Heidegger.

It’s a wake, forty years late.

And we will not be distracted by efforts to take the question too much back to Heidegger himself, reflecting, as we do, that perhaps this language, given the current constellation that impels us to raise questions once again, might yet shed light on Heidegger’s thinking on questioning, on raising or posing the question concerning technology, not to mention “Being.”

Heidegger is hardly alone in being subject to this, if his circumstances do outclass other scholarly scandals. Philosophy is thus just what every textbook about philosophy suggests: a list of names for popular consumption. The great philosopher is identifiable by a Google or Twitter ranking. Maybe just, more soberly, by citation frequency. Nietzsche’s new *Zarathustra* might have to be rewritten as “A Book for All and Everybody.”

I began by noting our passion for drawing lines, and there seems little that is not post-or anti- or “Afterphilosophy.” Yet this does not seem to be like a *vernissage*, a celebratory after-party. Indeed, “Afterphilosophy” bears comparison to “Afterphilology,” and considering the constellation introduces Nietzschean reflections.¹⁰ If the science in question for Nietzsche—ancient philology, ancient linguistics, ancient comparative literature, ancient history—hasn’t in the interim managed to pose the question of its own

discipline, what does that tell us? Thus, what Classics has not done is to pose the question of its own foundations, as Nietzsche argued that it should, namely to raise the question of its own discipline, which Nietzsche himself called the question of science qua science. Nietzsche claimed he was the first to do this, and, having written on Nietzsche and science for these many years, I am fairly sure that apart from Heidegger and in ways no Heideggerian has taken up, no one has sought to raise this question as a question since—not in the sense that Nietzsche meant by speaking of “the *problem of science itself*, science considered for the first time as problematic, as questionable” in the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*.¹¹

There is a parallel failure to pose the problem of philosophy itself. If this benumbed circumstance does not mean that philosophy is “dead,” as Hawking contends, it is spellbound. The becalmed circumstance is not Hawking’s doing and has nothing to do with the *Black Notebooks* scandal: we are adrift, and have been for quite some time.

Still, and as my passing remark on the problem of science suggests, the larger question or unframed theme is the absence of a thinker of the rank of a Nietzsche or a Heidegger today.

That would be the elephant in the room.

Asking after Heidegger, it matters that Heidegger could be utterly misogynistic and still write *Being and Time*. So too for his anti-Semitism, we must suppose. Perhaps the question should be what just what it is that we expect of philosophy, before, during, or above all, *after* Heidegger?¹²

LOGICAL REFLECTIONS

May we go on reading Heidegger? Is this not a finished endeavor, of a limited term? This question as such takes its cue from Emmanuel Faye and Richard Wolin and already had its best expression in pithiness in Gilbert Ryle’s “wasn’t a good man” apothegm.¹³ But as Richard Rorty pointed out in good American pragmatist fashion in response to Farías, we do read “Gottlob Frege, a vicious anti-Semite and proto-Nazi” without being hindered by his anti-Semitism.¹⁴ Sitting in my office in New York is Michael Beaney’s collection *The Frege Reader*.¹⁵ In my office I also have a book by Andrea Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic*.¹⁶ Nye reads from Parmenides through to Frege with an indispensable chapter, *A Thought Like A Hammer*.

In the current context, after Heidegger, at stake is the logical point of view as such. Every detail concerning human beings—whether we name them Preplatonic (Nietzsche) or Presocratic (Diels), or whether we read Nietzsche from Heidegger’s perspective or from the point of view of the Nazi hegemony

in university courses then offered on Nietzsche,¹⁷ or else with respect to our current concern, thinking after Heidegger—from the logical point of view, all these details are distractions, which means that they shift our focus.

Indeed all of our ethical discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of tossing or not tossing a fat man onto the tracks in the path of a passing trolley, in the so-called trolley problem, depend on this *irrelevance*. In fact, no one is throwing anyone, regardless of girth, anywhere: it is the conception that counts in ethical thinking.

And yet perhaps philosophy, the doing of, the reading of, is not an inherently edifying enterprise. How many outstanding philosophers are outstanding human beings? And of these exemplary beings, how many are outstanding *because* they are philosophers? Philosophy may not, as Nietzsche argued, referring to the educational institutions of Basel (and the rest of Europe), make us better citizens. Nietzsche had in mind the Swiss requirement that all citizens have a classical education, meaning an education in ancient philology and ancient philosophy. But what philosophy was for the ancients (and that is why the gods are involved in every case) had to do with preserving one's mind or "soul" in the transition from one life to another, saving one's place in the transition that is part of metempsychosis. If one has abandoned that metaphysical notion of the soul along with the Christian version, it would seem that philosophy's value for life (or life eternal) might also be abandoned.

SCIENCE AND CRITICAL HISTORY

Perhaps, after Heidegger, we might work to be relentlessly critical in our reading of Heidegger, highlighting the negative. This would be scientific, and yet Heidegger emphasized "science" as a question. In the spirit of both Kant and Nietzsche, Heidegger had supposed that we might attend to the prerequisites for putting philosophy on the path of a science. This reflection was still with him, as it might be given the death of Husserl in the Spring of 1938. To this extent, Heidegger offers a sustained reflection on understanding the significance of Nietzsche's meditations on history as a science, invoking standard references, but also seeking to explore the relevance of Nietzsche's own conjunction of use (calculation) and value for life (GA 46: 106–14/88–94).

Here I note only that few scholars have taken up the issue of "Heidegger and Science" and that those who have done so are inclined not to notice the work done by others in the same field. For my part, I elsewhere argue that philosophers get over their allergies to citing one another, as if noticing the work of others somehow diminished one's own originality.¹⁸ The problem of non-citation (obliviousness) is an endemic one in philosophy; it crosses the analytic-continental divide, Heidegger and Nietzsche studies, and much else

besides. And to those meaning to invoke Heidegger's reservations concerning "the literature" to defend their ongoing philosophical autism, I would respond by observing that the topic of *Heidegger and Science*, like *Heidegger and Theology*, or *Heidegger and Anti-Semitism*, is nothing but literature.

We can, as we have seen and as has been done for years now, read Heidegger for the dirt: we can stand around and lament his anti-Semitism, as we might and should. And yet it is instructive (and we should think about this) that we, as philosophers, do not lament his deep and thoroughgoing misogyny. And there is a lot of dirt there, even more than we can guess at, when it comes to the woman question that we could add to the Jewish question, or the American question, or the question of Heidegger's unrelentingly critical take on the same techno-science that we deeply believe will save us (all we need for that is to declare our "belief" in climate change and then, with a little help from science, we will be saved).

ON THE DEATH ANIMALS DO NOT DIE

Elsewhere, I advert to the difficult question of Heidegger in conjunction with the animal question, which is, so I argue, less a matter of the animal's putative world-indigence—though this is part of it, just insofar as this poverty is engendered—a matter of our obliviousness to the lives of animals. This was true for Heidegger too, despite his attention to Karl von Frisch, who was no friend to animals (quite in spite of his observations and as attested by the same). In Heidegger's sense, the same indigence is manufactured by way of the systematic breeding of animals that deprives them of their lives as much as it deprives them of their own deaths. Animals are manufactured, as Heidegger says in the purest of metonymic connections, as so many corpses-to-be, as the standing reserve of industrial agribusiness, and quite as such, they do not die. Specifically, they do not die their own deaths in mass slaughter but are instead challenged forth into technological reserves and by-products, for the production of food and—in addition to clothing and shoes, cosmetics and paint, soap and ink—their organs, destined to be used for the sake of human life extension and preservation.¹⁹

We might think about that.

NOTES

1. See Babette Babich, "Good for Nothing: On Philosophy and Its Discontents," in *Why Philosophy*, ed. Diego Bubbio and Jeff Malpas (New York: Davis Publishers, 2017).

2. Justin Smith, *The Philosopher: A History in Six Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

3. Wolfgang Rößler, “Hermann Diels und die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,” in *Die modernen Vater der Antike: Die Entwicklung der Altertumswissenschaften an Akademie und Universität in Berlin des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Annette M. Bertschi and Colin G. King (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 369–96, particularly 374–75. See Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Runia, *Aietiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer: The Sources. Volume I* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 93ff. for a discussion of Nietzsche as a contemporary of Hermann Diels in the circle established around Ritschl.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 157.

5. *Ibid.*, 158.

6. Among others, Tracy B. Strong urges that we make a politico-historical distinction between Heidegger’s anti-Judaism and his anti-Semitism. See Strong, “On Relevant Events, Then and Now,” in *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks 1931–1941*, ed. Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016).

7. Steve Fuller, “Science Has Always Been a Bit ‘Post-Truth,’” *The Guardian*, December 15, 2016.

8. Cf. Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, tr. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015) and Ethan Kleinmann, *Generation Existential: Heidegger’s Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

9. Matt Warman, “Stephen Hawking Tells Google ‘Philosophy Is Dead,’” *Telegraph*, May 17, 2011.

10. The term refers to the title of a defense written by Erwin Rohde on Nietzsche’s behalf but addressed to Wagner in response to Wilamowitz-Möllendorff’s “Future-Philology.” See further: Christian Benne, *Nietzsche und die historisch-kritische Philologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

11. Nietzsche, “Attempt at an Auto-Critique, §2,” in *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967).

12. I address additional elements in “The ‘New’ Heidegger,” in *Heidegger in the 21st Century*, ed. Tziouannis Georgakis and Paul Ennis (Frankfurt am Main: Springer, 2015).

13. “Heidegger. Can’t be a good philosopher. Wasn’t a good man”: Gilbert Ryle as quoted by James Thrower, letter to the editor, *The Times Higher Education Supplement* 850 (February 17, 1989), 12.

14. Richard Rorty, “Taking Philosophy Seriously: Victor Farias’ *Heidegger and Nazism*,” *The New Republic*, April 11, 1988, 32.

15. Gottlob Frege, *The Frege Reader*, ed. Michael Beaney (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

16. Andrea Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* (London: Routledge, 1990).

17. For a discussion of Nazi readers, focusing on the “biologism” of Rosenberg and Krieck, see Christopher Rickey, *Revolutionary Saints: Heidegger, National*

Socialism, and Antinomian Politics (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2001), 220, in addition to Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). I would add, as fundamental to Heidegger's invocation of Nietzsche as a "life philosopher," less Jaspers or Löwith than Ernst Krieck's *Leben als Prinzip der Weltanschauung und Problem der Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Armanen Verlag, 1938).

18. See Babette Babich, "Are They Good? Are They Bad? Double Hermeneutics and Citation in Philosophy, Asphodel and Alan Rickman, Bruno Latour and the 'Science Wars,'" in *Das Interpretative Universum*, ed. Paula Angelova, Jaassen Andreev, and Emil Lessky (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).

19. See the discussion of Paul Virilio on the pitiless in contemporary art in Babette Babich, "On the Aesthetic Edge: Futures of the Contemporary in Agamben, Virilio, Nancy," in *Futures of the Contemporary: Music and Performance*, ed. Paulo de Assis et al. (Louvain: University of Louvain Press, 2018).